



5th and 6th March, Melbourne, Australia

Conference measures PBS scheme performance

A two-day conference on Performance Based Standards (PBS) co-hosted by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), National Transport Commission (NTC), VicRoads, Truck Industry Council (TIC), Victorian Transport Association (VTA) and ARRB Group was organised by the Australian Road Transport Suppliers Association (ARTSA) on the 5th and 6th March 2013 in Melbourne. Billed as the first major PBS gathering in 10 years, the 120 attendees heard from nearly 30 speakers across the spectrum of issues surrounding the PBS Scheme.

PBS is an Australian development that has passed infancy, and is now achieving worthwhile approval levels. There are just over 1000 heavy vehicles operating on Australian roads, the vast majority of which are in Victoria and Queensland. PBS was developed to lift both the safety and productivity of heavy vehicles and buses in this country, to meet an ever-growing freight and passenger transport demand. The evidence quoted by PBS operators at the conference is that PBS does deliver considerable benefits in terms of improved productivity resulting in reduced vehicle movements. The exact improvements are not easy to define but sufficient for a number of major operators to go to considerable expense and effort to attain approved PBS vehicles and route access. "It's clear we need to develop better measures of productivity gain and to sell the benefits to the general public", said Gerard Waldron, Managing Director of ARRB Group. The NHVR has set a target of over \$12 billion in heavy vehicle productivity gains to be achieved in the next 20 years.

The conference discussed ways of improving the current PBS system. A number of strong messages emerged:

- Adequate resourcing of the NHVR, who has recently taken over the national responsibility for PBS as a "one stop shop" is essential. An operator and manufacturers panel including representatives from Kalari, Cartage Australia, Bus Industry Council, Volvo and Maxitrans commented, "if the NHVR cannot cope, the PBS scheme stops." Resourcing of the NHVR office is a number one priority. It needs to draw on the experience of the PBS Review Panel (PRP) to assist in this task.
- Transitioning popular PBS designs into more generic "blueprints" so they can be introduced at little or no cost. With over 60% of the approved PBS designs made up of smaller truck and dog combinations, it makes no sense to take up time and resources of the NHVR in rubber-stamping these approvals. Blueprint them and move them into the mainstream so they are accessible by all operators, was a common call.

- This should include 4-axle dogs as a start, potentially moving to 3-axle and then 5- and 6-axle.
- Revise the standards. There are numerous examples where the current standards are either not right or simply inadequate. These include:
 - A standard tyre specification and rating system is urgently needed.
 - A similar system may also be needed for suspensions.
 - Allow manufacturers to self certify along similar lines to ADR approvals.
 - A review of PBS braking requirements.
- Assisting local government in understanding PBS and the implications for the over 80% of Australia's roads that they own. Without local government, vehicles can't move, so a concerted effort to help them open up the network to PBS vehicles is needed.
- Recognition of the specific needs of buses, such as frontal projection and tail swing, which are affected by engineering constraints.
- More focus on tackling the bridge assessment issue where slow assessment and a proposal for cost recovery could threaten PBS.

According to Dr Peter Hart, Chairman of ARTSA and moderator of the closing session, "the industry has spoken and the regulatory sector has also made its honest assessment. From here we need to work together and tick off some of the hard won ideas put forward at the conference. The rest of the world is watching our progress with interest".

For further information on the PBS conference including presentations and photographs, see <http://www.artsa.com.au/library/2013/pbs/> or contact the ARTSA Executive Officer Rob Perkins on exec@artsa.com.au or phone 0411 402 832



Australian Road Transport Suppliers Association Inc
 Melbourne, Australia
www.artsa.com.au
 19th March 2013