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Press release

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Broader focus is needed to improve heavy vehicle road safety

ARTSA calls on all parties involved with the road transport industry to work constructively towards significantly reducing the number of road crashes involving heavy vehicles over the next five to ten years. We, the transport industry need to set ourselves an ambitious heavy vehicle road safety improvement target and measure our progress towards that outcome.

Australia has a proud history in taking world-leading steps to improve road safety. The current RSRT debate risks overlooking the broad range of safety initiatives that are needed if we are to make Australia a world leader in road safety.

According to ARTSA's Chairman Dr Peter Hart, "ARTSA's International Heavy Vehicle Safety Summit held in 2015 delivered 12 key lessons for improved heavy vehicle road safety. Only one of the 12 recommendations concerned remuneration. Remuneration is vitally important, but it should not be allowed to hijack what is a critical policy issue for the entire community."

"Politicians and policy makers need to heed the calls of many groups, and refocus efforts towards a range of safety initiatives that are needed to make Australia a leader in heavy vehicle road safety, rather than relying on a singular focus of remuneration to deliver improved safety outcomes", said Dr Hart.

The full International Heavy Vehicle Safety Summit report is available at

<https://www.heavyvehiclesafetysummit.com/>

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The 12 lessons from the International Heavy Vehicle Safety Summit were:

Lesson 1: We need evidence to justify the strategies for improvement

Road safety statistics mainly concern fatal crashes. There are also a range of road safety incidents including moderate-intensity crashes, fires, loss of loads and breakdowns that cause great disruption to the road system. They are not publicly reported and as a result the appreciation of such events is missing.

We know:

- 90% of crashes are due to human error.
- If we met the road safety performance of Sweden then we would halve our current road trauma.
- Articulated trucks are over-represented in crash statistics in relation to their numbers on the road.
- Heavy truck fatalities have reduced by nearly 60% since 2000.
- 80% of multi vehicle accidents occur at night time.
- Truck driving remains one of Australia's most dangerous occupations.
- The latest National Transport Insurance safety report is that a staggering 72% of its major payouts are for single-truck crashes or incidents.

Lesson 2: Improving road safety is a huge challenge of international proportions. It needs combined efforts of many parties

Groups acting alone are unlikely to have the knowledge, resources or influence to achieve real progress with road safety. Australia needs a long term partnership between industry and government akin to that achieved in Sweden where the level of crash rates are half of that in Australia.

Lesson 3: We need to accelerate consideration of mandating advanced safety technologies on new vehicles

The 'Safe System Approach' is being advocated by several Australian States and Territories. This approach accepts that human beings will make mistakes and that the design of vehicles and the roads they run on should provide protections against mistakes. It also requires that single points of failure that could have serious consequences be provided with a separate protection.

Lesson 4: Speed and fatigue are the highest single causal factors of serious crashes

According to NTI insurance safety report, inappropriate speed for conditions and fatigue are the two most important causal factors in claim incidents, whereas mechanical failure is regarded as a minor crash causal- factor.

Lesson 5: Intelligent technologies on trucks can greatly protect against driver error and poor vehicle dynamics.

There are now several relatively new technologies that can improve safety outcomes. These include proprietary technologies built into trucks and also retro-fit technologies including cameras and fatigue-alert devices. The benefits in Australia of safety technologies are not being adequately assessed.

Lesson 6: Driver distraction is an increasing risk and becoming a major cause of fatalities

Using mobile phones whilst driving can increase the crash risk by a factor of four. More research and education is needed to address this major causal factor. Companies should be encouraged or incentivised to adopt a "truck on, phone off" policy.

Lesson 7: Unique safety challenges arise from multi-combination vehicles.

Brake compatibility and the challenge of mixed braking and mechanical systems on trailer and prime movers provide a unique challenge. More work is needed to ensure that the industry understands the challenges that arise from matching different equipment and systems.

Lesson 8: Age is a causal factor – both for equipment and for people

Insurance claims point to a correlation between driver age and increasing accident rates. The median age of truck drivers in Australia is over 50 years, which is higher than employees in most industries.

Lesson 9: Driver training needs to be revisited

More rigorous driver training and retraining along with the development of programs for women drivers are factors that could have a positive impact on safety outcomes. They deserve immediate attention and action.

Lesson 10: Driver health and welfare need to be more strongly recognised and acted upon

The impact of driver age, life on the road, lack of rest, poor or non-existent rest stop facilities and the incidence of alcohol and drugs present major challenges in improving safety outcomes. It is an issue of national importance that deserves a national approach.

Lesson 11: Decent driver and operator remuneration is important for road safety

A fair days pay for a fair days travel should be the Australian motto. Improvements in remuneration levels and better operating conditions, driven in part by Chain of Responsibility requirements, are urgently needed.

Lesson 12: Truck and trailer fire rates are unacceptably high

According to the NTI insurance-claim reports, fire losses account for about 10% of total payouts. This is excessive.