



PETER HART

New thinking is needed to improve industry safety

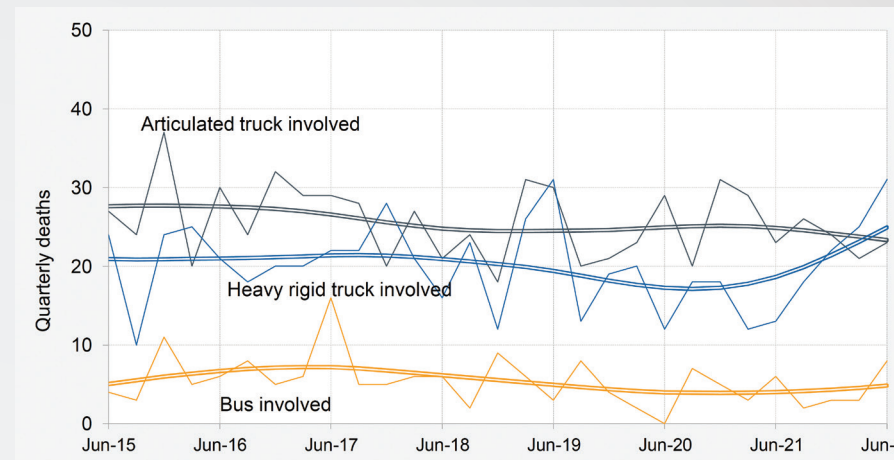
report provides great insight into the safety performance of the heavy vehicle fleet, as represented by the sample of trucks that NTI insures. There were 852 incidents that were assessed for the 2020 insurance year. About one in 400 trucks insured by NTI can be expected to have a large-loss claim per year. The classification of causes of the 2020 NTI large-loss crashes are shown in Figure 1. The majority of the incidents resulted from errors made by the heavy-vehicle driver. NTARC recently issued a collaborative report with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) about the correlation between roadworthiness problems and the likelihood of having a large claim incident. NTARC is an important investigative body that is doing excellent work to inform the heavy vehicle road logistics sector about safety performance. But it is not enough. The Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE) publishes a frequent report about road trauma involving heavy vehicles. In the 2020 calendar year a total of 177 people were killed in crashes involving heavy vehicles. Of this number 31 (17.5 per cent) were occupants of the heavy vehicle

cabin. For reference, the total number of road deaths in 2020 on public roads was 1,100. Therefore, the heavy-vehicle-involved road trauma is about 17 per cent of Australia's road trauma. The trends over the past two years – see Figure 2 – show a significant increase in road deaths involving rigid trucks and static performance for other heavy vehicles. Note that the BITRE data does not include work-place trauma. The NTI/NTARC reports do not identify the proportion of large-loss incidents that involve a fatality or serious injury. Furthermore, there is no tie-up with the BITRE report, at least not in the public domain.

The trends that are in evident in Figure 2 are gradually improving when the scale of the freight task is considered. According to NTI the number of trucks has increased by about 50 per cent since 2003. The freight tonne-kilometres has increased 55 per cent. Despite this, the level of road trauma has decreased, until recently. So, maybe we can just wait for roads to improve, trucks to get safer and drivers to get better. Sorry, I disagree.

Australia has a National Road Strategy and states and territories have strategies that are informed by the National Strategy. The National Strategy is developed by The Federal Office of Road Safety. The latest Strategy document concerns the period 2021-2030. It notes that there were a significant number of work-related deaths that were not the result of collisions. Thirty-one per cent of work-related fatalities were the result of falling from vehicles or being injured while loading vehicles. Therefore, a significant level of logistics-industry trauma does not appear in the road-safety trauma reports. The box shows an excerpt from the Strategy that concerns heavy-vehicle safety. The Strategy is necessary and appropriate. But it is still not enough because detailed proposals need to be developed and justified. All the reports and strategies I have identified in this article have merit and are important. I think we could do better. I

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propose that a Heavy Vehicle Safety Office be established within AustRoads that reports to State and Territory transport ministers. This office should obtain reports about specific incidents involving heavy vehicles from insurance companies, from emergency services agencies (Police, EPAs) and from state Work Safety Regulators. Incidents might be defined as large-losses for insurers or serious roadside or workplace injuries. This Office should publish reports that classify and explain the causes of the incidents involving heavy vehicles and consider changes that could improve performance. It would work co-operatively with the Federal Office of Road Safety to fill in the details of the National Strategy needed to get heavy vehicle safety to the next level. Remember the adage that you can't control what you can't understand. The Heavy Vehicle Safety Office can be

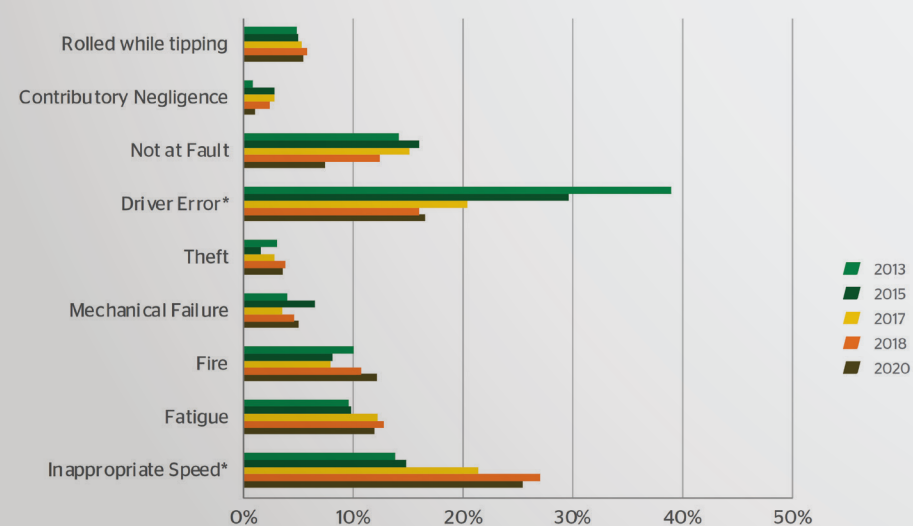
paid for from heavy vehicle registration charges. It would soon pay for itself via a reduction in the number of safety incidents. It should report to transport ministers through existing regulatory structures. The Heavy Vehicle Safety Office would have access to registration data and could also obtain specific information from vehicle suppliers to determine what technologies were on specific vehicles. The Office would not conduct site investigations and it would not be called into legal disputes because it would not publish details about specific incidents. The Heavy Vehicle Safety Office would also be charged, for example, with monitoring the adoption of safety technologies on the road safety of heavy vehicles. The Federal Strategy makes no explicit reference to Autonomous Emergency Braking or Lane Departure Warning technologies. The case for

promoting these technologies probably exists in the crash data. The Office could also develop proposals for improved work practices by operators and driver accreditation levels. It could consider the details of a Safe Systems approach to workplace safety and try to explain what this means for industry. For example, an urgent need exists to improve the career structure, training and status of heavy vehicle drivers, who are the most important element in industry safety performance. Many of the improvements that are needed are outside the Federal Government's domain for road safety. The Heavy Vehicle Safety Office could provide the leadership needed for our industry to significantly improve safety performance.

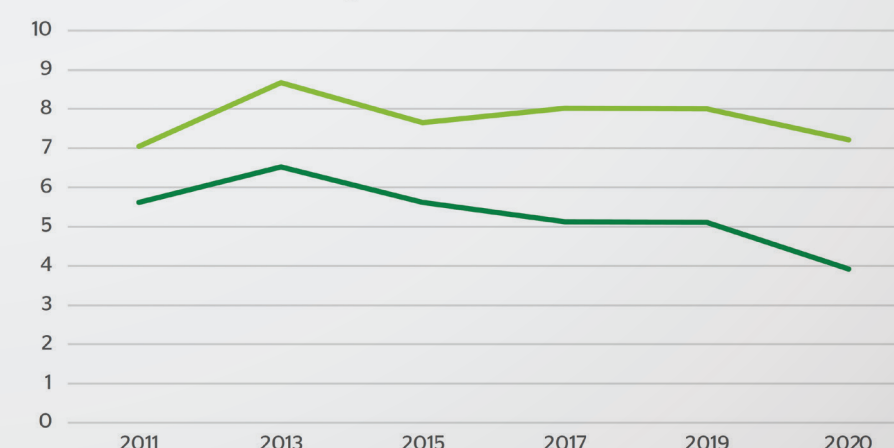
Dr Peter Hart,
ARTSA-I Life Member

1. NTI (2020) assessment of causes of large-losses.

INCIDENT CAUSE



2. Large Loss Frequency



NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY ACTION PLAN FOR HEAVY VEHICLES

Road Trauma

- Regulate for and promote heavy vehicle safety technologies
- Strengthen national heavy vehicle operational regulation
- Provide community and novice driver education about sharing the roads safely with heavy vehicles
- Promote and reduce barriers for the uptake of safe new heavy vehicles
- Protect all road users from conflicts with construction vehicles through state/territory government construction contract requirements such as requiring inclusion of safety technologies
- Consider the scope for Safe System investigations of fatal and serious-injury heavy vehicle crashes
- Support fatigue management through investment in heavy vehicle rest stops
- See strategy for OH&S items


TONY MCMULLAN

In my column this month I am going to discuss the current global supply chain reality and the associated challenges that this continues to present for truck manufacturers. It is not news that new truck sales are strong. 2021 saw 41,404 new heavy vehicle sales, just 225 trucks short of an all-time record set in 2018. Sales are at similar levels this year with customer order intake not abating. A record in truck sales for 2022 looms. These sales are the result of strong consumer demand before, during and after the initial COVID outbreak, helped, in no small way, by Federal Government incentives to keep our economy from collapsing in the wake of pandemic. But there is a problem. Australian truck manufacturers, importers and distributors equally, are experiencing significant challenges within their supply chains both at the primary supply and secondary manufacturing stages. Due to the continuing disruption to global supply chains, truck suppliers face long lead times in delivering new truck orders. To give perspective to the supply chain problems being faced by truck OEMs, we are all aware of the well-publicised worldwide shortage of microprocessors, however shortages are far more broad reaching, including availability of internal and external finishing trim materials; resin shortages for components such as, sleeper cabs, roofs

The supply chain reality

and bonnets; shortages in bullbars, fifth wheels, fuel tanks, exhaust pipes and mufflers, alloy wheels, mudguards, general metal components, and fluids for production; shipping constraints, skyrocketing shipping costs, shipping transit times now 100 days, up from 40 days; and my favourite, last year if you wanted your truck painted blue, good luck, no blue pigment could be sourced, worldwide. In summary, all elements of truck building and delivery are in peak demand and under stress. These challenges are real, change daily and are set to get worse. They are today's known problems. OEMs do not know the supply chain problems they will encounter over the next 12 months. They only know they will be difficult to predict. At best we can only manage — we cannot solve them. With the reopening of economies creating strong demand in a post-COVID world, supply chain problems have obviously forced companies to rethink their corporate strategy. 'Just in time' has been the manufacturing sector's mantra for some five decades but now has been found wanting in a COVID impacted world. Not unsurprisingly, management is now factoring into the equation of inventory management, the element of risk as opposed to the previously singular focus upon costs. Companies are now transitioning to a 'just in case' model of inventory management. Just in case, is a set of words that sounds like a warning. Just in case of what, was my first thought, going straight to a scenario I do not want to think about. Risk, always a factor in business, has taken on a renewed management emphasis and is now the prime determinant for building enduring organisational capability. The pandemic has been the tipping point.

Countries are finding now that their supply chains are not as robust as they thought, in many cases, these chains have failed. Add to this, geopolitical tensions arising from a resurgent China, the world's production plant and warehouse, as well as the war in Ukraine, our industry, the road freight sector, should heed the notice we have been given by the pandemic and assess our role in an increasingly troubled world. Resilience needs to be built into the Australian freight sector, 'just in case'. COVID and the supply chain disruptions have established this as an urgent need. During COVID, Government established a National Coordination Mechanism to ensure the capabilities of federal, state and territory governments as well as the private sector, were brought to bear to address the crises. This happened after COVID hit. A similar mechanism is perhaps needed now before a future event, as a different approach to address the strategic problems the world is presenting to Australia. The mechanism would for starters:

- Prioritise the security and efficiency of the national road network throughout Australia for freight distribution. The network must be resilient and have the capacity to respond to disruptions to safeguard domestic capability.
- Ensure diesel and diesel exhaust fluid security.
- Build a strategic workforce.
- Have bipartisan support.

I call upon Government to support and facilitate this action now, 'just in case'

Tony McMullan
CEO, Truck Industry Council


PETER ANDERSON

The VTA was thrilled to recently host an Alternative Fuels Summit to tackle the important challenge of how our industry can start the important transition away from traditional fossil fuels. The road freight industry is dependent upon diesel fuel to provide the services that all of the population in Australia needs. Our trucks need fuel to operate. We need consistency of supply, predictable costs and a return on effort and investment. Our sources of energy are changing, and the nature of fuel will look very different in the not-so-distant-future. Changes to Earth's climate driven by increased carbon emissions are already having widespread effects on the environment. The effects of global climate change have been slow and gradual, but consistent. But as these effects accelerate their impact, they have become more noticeable and more measurable. Global climate change is not a future problem. It is something that is being dealt with now. Stopping or repairing the effects of mankind on this earth is a goal that is a long way off. What we do today will have a significant effect on the generations that will come after us. As our actions and attitudes towards slowing the effects of climate change also start to accelerate, it becomes apparent that the challenges of change become more confronting. We would all like the climate problems fixed, but to what

Operators must start planning for the transition to alternative fuels

level of disruption in our day-to-day life? We don't all want to become Climate Warriors, but we do want to face our responsibilities. Reducing our industry's dependence on carbon-based fuels is one of those responsibilities. Acknowledging that we can reduce the negative effect of carbon emissions from the burning of diesel is an early step. But it is a very difficult step. We have become dependent upon the ease of process in maintaining this energy source and methods of operation, business measurement and levels of service expectations rest firmly in the steady supply of diesel. We focus on its cost, think rarely about supply disruptions and have not been supplied with any relevant alternative. As I said to delegates at the Summit: why should I worry about climate change? The answer is simple — change is coming and coming very quickly. Change can be difficult. Difficult to understand, difficult to foresee and difficult to adapt to. Understanding what we can do in our industry and our businesses is a vital first step in acknowledging any change. The Alternative Fuels Summit was planned from a perspective of zero understanding. Knowing that the movement to reduce emissions is growing, all road transport operators should now be planning and estimating what level of action and commitment they will need to take to meet their future responsibilities. It is very confronting. How will I operate without diesel? How will I meet my current or future capital commitments? What will it cost my business to change? Will my customers be willing to pay

more for the same service? The Alternative Fuels Summit provided direction and confidence for operators to be able to understand what the future will look like. Our expert presenters took delegates on a journey. Why change our energy source? What fuels will be available in the future? What can the government do? What will transition look like? What products are available now? It was terrific to hear about the exciting developments from fuel companies like Viva Energy who are leading the transport industry in transitioning to alternative fuels like hydrogen, that right now is being deployed to power heavy vehicles. Viva is doing terrific work in making hydrogen available to freight operators with its charging hub in Geelong well on its way to becoming operational and able to fuel hydrogen buses, and heavy, waste and recovery vehicles. And of course, equipment providers like Volvo, Daimler, Hyzon and SEA Electric are already manufacturing vehicles that can tap into electric and hydrogen fuelling technology. With the recent change of government and the subsequent legislation of a lower emissions reduction target of 43 per cent (based on 2005 emissions), the industry's acceleration towards alternative fuels will rapidly increase. Operators that start to plan for the transition early will benefit from early-adoption to the equipment, fuels, and technology of the not-too-distant future.

Peter Anderson
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