



TIM DAWSON State Secretary

TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION

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Dear

RE: Roadside Amenities for Truck Drivers in Western Australia

I am writing this letter to you, and to all other members of the State Parliament, and Western Australian members of the Federal Parliament, to bring to your attention the situation regarding the lack of reasonable rest facilities for truck drivers on Western Australian Highways.

Over the Christmas period the Transport Workers Union of Western Australia ('the Union') surveyed transport operators in Western Australia about roadside amenities for truck drivers in this State. The Union received an overwhelming response to that survey, and, I set out below the main responses:

1. Western Australia needs more truck rest areas.
2. Truck rest areas need to have parking for multiple trucks and road trains. This includes Road Train Assembly areas which are large enough to park, and to safely manoeuvre trucks with multiple trailers.
3. Truck rest areas should have
 - a. Separate male and female facilities, with showers and toilets, which are regularly cleaned; and
 - b. Outdoor rest facilities at truck rest areas, such as benches, and tables for meals.
4. Truck rest areas should have signs that indicate that it is a "Truck Only Rest Area", so that they are not taken up by caravans, and by the general public.
5. Truck rest areas should have emergency communication equipment which could be accessed in an emergency and/or if there is poor mobile telephone coverage. That communication equipment should be powered and be self-sustainable, for example, by way of solar PV with a battery backup.
6. Roadhouses should supply clean showers and toilets at no cost to a truck driver, and also provide food that is healthy.

The responses to the survey confirmed what we already know, and what the Union, and the transport industry have been seeking for some time. That is, that the amenities at the roadside truck rest areas on Western Australian highways are extremely poor, and also, that the facilities at some of the roadhouses are only marginally better.

Do you believe that truck drivers should have to squat behind a truck, or in the bush, when they need to go to the toilet, or that they should have to go for several days without having access to clean showers? Should truck drivers have to skip rest breaks because the truck rest area is taken up by holiday makers? *If you do not, then you need to do something about this.*

Why should those long distance truck drivers have to endure third world working conditions in Australia in 2020? They should be treated with respect, and afforded the dignity to do their work in appropriate conditions.

This is not only a health and safety issue, but it is also a major mental health issue for truck drivers. Long distance truck drivers often work in areas where they do not have the means to communicate back home, they work long hours and in isolation, all of which puts significant stress on them. Is it too much to ask that long distance truck drivers have decent amenities?

Truck drivers are a vital link to a prosperous economy. Their work is crucial to connecting the towns, communities and commercial operations spread throughout this vast State, and also, connecting Western Australia to the rest of Australia. Accordingly, truck drivers play a very important role in keeping the commerce of Western Australia going. Truck drivers also ensure that the people of this State can put food on their table, and can have a roof over their heads.

Roadside truck rest areas, and also roadhouses, require urgent and significant investment in order to bring them up to the standards that long distance truck drivers could reasonably expect in the 21st century.

Therefore, on behalf of transport workers, and in particular long distance truck drivers, we ask that you, as member of Parliament, support long distance truck drivers, and that you use your best endeavors to ensure that these drivers are treated with respect and dignity, by way of them having amenities at truck rest areas, and roadhouses, which are fit for the 21st century.

These improvements are very important for truck drivers' safety and mental wellbeing. However, they are also important for the Western Australian economy, and for the future of the transport industry. This is because, "without trucks Australia stops". It is, therefore, vital that you as legislators take responsibility for this and ensure that the necessary upgrades are made to roadside truck amenities and infrastructure in this State. This will allow the industry to attract, and retain talented operators, and also more women and young people.

You have legislated for mandated fatigue breaks for the safety of truck drivers, and the travelling public. However, when truck drivers are unable to take breaks because of a lack of adequate truck stops, because there are no toilets, or, because the truck rest areas are full of caravans, then that can lead to fatigue issues. That in turn makes our roads less safe.

As a member of Parliament as a representative of the people of Western Australia, you have a responsibility to truck drivers, and to all road users of Western Australia.

It is of great urgency that you listen to the transport industry, and that you respond to the problems faced by truck drivers through myself, and the Transport Workers Union WA Branch.

I look forward to your response in support of improving the working conditions of long distance truck drivers, and in so doing making our roads safer.

It is time to make a lasting and sustainable change to this very important and vital industry in Australia, which is of great significance to the State of Western Australia.

Tim Dawson – WA Branch Secretary
Transport Workers' Union