

# **NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVER ACTION PLAN**

Draft for consultation

Draft

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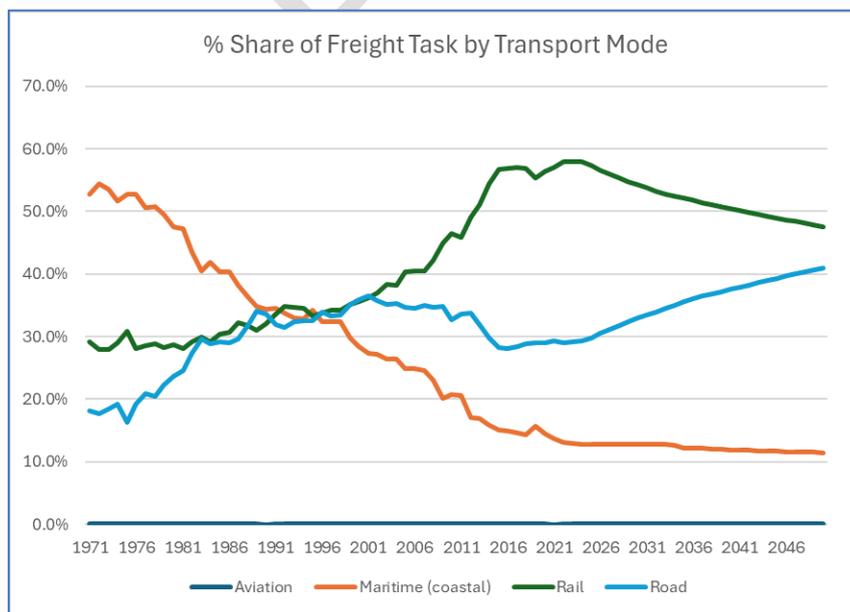
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The biggest issue facing the Australian road transport industry, both freight and passenger, is the critical driver shortage, which in turn has serious implications for the Australian economy, communities and broader Transport Supply Chain industries. Truck driving is the ninth most common occupation in Australia. Heavy vehicle (HV) Drivers are the essential workforce behind Australia’s domestic economy. Without HV Drivers, our goods, food and passengers cannot get where they need to go. More than 185,000 truck drivers and 40,000 bus and coach drivers<sup>1</sup> keep national supply chains and passengers moving, contributing \$33 billion to GDP in FY 2024–25<sup>2</sup>. Yet every state and territory<sup>3</sup> is already experiencing driver shortages. The International Road Transport Union (IRU) Global Truck Driver shortage report shows a deepening driver shortage with 28,000 unfilled positions in 2024 forecast to grow to 78,000 by 2029.

Despite these shortages, demand pressure is only set to intensify. Official forecasts show sustained growth in the road freight task to 2050, with road’s share projected to rise from 31% in 2026 to 41% by 2050. This equates to freight task volumes lifting by 54%, averaging 1.8% per year freight task to 2050.

Meanwhile, the supply of truck drivers has expanded at just 0.97% annually over the past 25 years.<sup>1</sup> This widening gap between fast-rising freight demand and slow workforce growth makes targeted recruitment, training, and retention of HV Drivers an urgent economic priority.

The National Heavy Vehicle Driver Action Plan (the Plan) was developed in partnership with industry leaders, and its program of work validated by broader stakeholder consultation. It provides a shared commitment to address HV Driver shortages. The Plan will identify and build upon local initiatives achieving good outcomes, trial new approaches, and identify where advocacy is required to ensure State and Commonwealth government programs can better support this integral sector of the Australian economy.



<sup>1</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia. (2025, November). National Industry Trend – November 2025 [Data set].

<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/labour-force-trending>

<sup>2</sup> IBISWorld. (2026, February). Industry Data Wizard [Database]. Retrieved February 6, 2026

<sup>3</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia. (n.d.). Occupation Shortage List. Retrieved February 3, 2026, from

<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortage/occupation-shortage-list>

The Action Plan, and its program of work, are organised under four priority areas.

<p><b>Priority area 1:</b></p> <p><b>Elevate perceptions of the profession</b></p>	<p>Aims to build public awareness of HV driving as a highly skilled and rewarding career that is a legitimate alternative to university with equivalent earning potential. The program of work includes development of a national communication strategy to build broad community engagement and positively influence the public perceptions of the profession.</p>
<p><b>Priority area 2:</b></p> <p><b>Improve the supply of HV Drivers</b></p>	<p>Builds upon priority area 1, and considers how to attract new entrants from labour pools that are underrepresented, or could be more effectively targeted. The program of work explores how to maximise benefits from skilled migration; supporting employers with recruitment tool kits; and, developing high-quality resources to facilitate work readiness and transition programs for use with a wide range of different target groups.</p>
<p><b>Priority area 3:</b></p> <p><b>Improve training/licensing pathways</b></p>	<p>Focuses on improving funding for and access to career and learning pathways for new and existing supply chain workers. It also includes actions to improve the quality and consistency of training, assessment and licensing for HV Drivers. Specific areas of focus include a national HV Driver apprenticeship, and building the driver trainer workforce so it can meet demand in terms of number of people trained, and the quality of the training they receive.</p>
<p><b>Priority area 4:</b></p> <p><b>Retain the Drivers we have</b></p>	<p>The first three priorities aim to improve attraction and development of a safe and efficient HV Driving workforce. However, HV Drivers often leave the industry due to a range of issues that must be addressed to support better retention. Actions for this priority include improving access to and the quality of facilities for HV Drivers; and developing resources to support HV Driver wellbeing, continuing professional development, career planning and satisfaction with employment.</p>

## Priority area 1: Elevate perceptions of the profession

Public perception of HV Driving as an attractive and rewarding career must be elevated.

Redefining the industry’s image will allow a broader range of potential candidates to be aware of the significance of the driving role in Australia’s supply chain, and the breadth of opportunities available to talented individuals.

HV Driving should be seen as a professional career requiring highly skilled individuals, and an attractive alternative to professions requiring a university education with equivalent earning potential, no HECS debt, and rewarding future opportunities.

*Truck Driver Pay Compared with Higher Education Qualified Occupations*

Occupation	Earnings per week	Higher ed. qualified (%)
Electronics Engineers	\$1,782	79.4%
Librarians	\$1,780	78.7%
<b>Truck Drivers</b>	<b>\$1,780</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
Inspectors and Regulatory Officers	\$1,764	36.8%
Social Professionals	\$1,758	69.8%

*Source: JSA, Occupation Profile Data, November 2025*

The Action Plan Program of Work will:

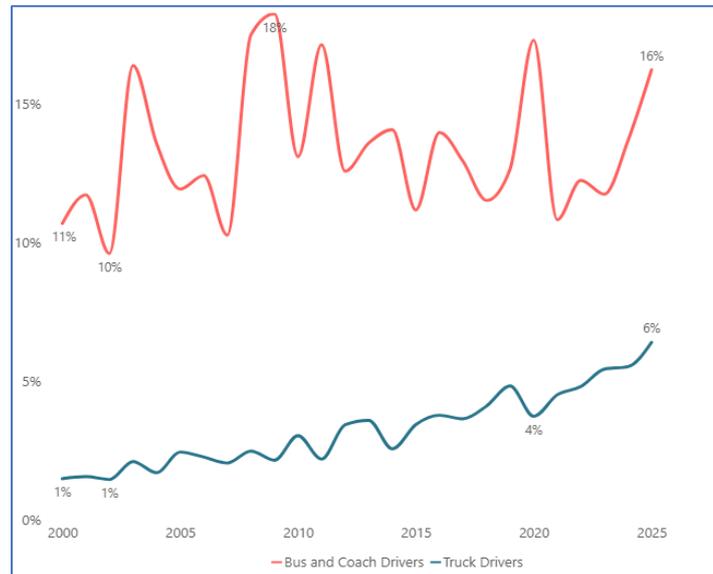
- Develop a coordinated national communication strategy targeted at a broad audience. The strategy should deliver consistent messaging about:
  - current and future opportunities across the range of HV freight, passenger and equipment types
  - earning potential, job security, flexibility, mobility, and self-employment opportunities
  - career opportunities and learning pathways.
- Positively influence the perceptions of school students and their parents, people considering a career change, and groups that are underrepresented in the driving workforce.
- Build stronger engagement with teachers and careers advisers, enhancing the manner in which driving careers are described and who is targeted.
- Produce collateral, resources and tool kits using best-practice communication techniques that can be implemented across a range of mediums, forums and contexts.
- Evaluate existing initiatives, then broaden and build upon those that are achieving positive outcomes.

## Priority area 2: Improve the supply of HV Drivers

The road transport sector has an ageing workforce. An adequate pipeline of new recruits is required to replace retiring HV Drivers.

There is a significant gender imbalance in the HV Driver workforce, with only slow improvement in female representation over time. Women made up only 6.4% of truck drivers and 16.2% of bus and coach drivers in 2025<sup>4</sup>. Other under-represented cohorts in Australia could also be targeted.

Skilled migration is an option to address driver shortages; however, migration settings/agreements, licence recognition schemes and programs to support transition must be improved.



*Female Participation in HV Driving Occupations, 2000–2025*

Age restrictions currently prevent employers attracting younger workers. Pathways facilitating the entry of 18-year-olds to the driving workforce should be established.

The Action Plan Program of Work will:

- Build upon the work of priority area 1, develop a recruitment tool kit that provides advice and resources about how and where to best target candidates in different target groups.
- Develop a multifaceted program to better utilise skilled migration, including:
  - advocating for HV driving to be included in skilled migration arrangements
  - advocating for more robust training and assessment requirements for recognition of international HV licences, and consistency between jurisdictional licensing bodies
  - designing and implementing a national program to support migrants' transition
- Evaluate existing school-to-work and work-readiness programs, and develop a national approach that draws on what has proven to be successful in the past
- Work with jurisdictional bodies to identify possible solutions to current age restriction barriers
- Identify pathways and attraction strategies for workers with transferable skills
- Address issues with workplace facilities and culture that may be a barrier for some people.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Detailed Labour Force Survey, EQ08 - Employed persons by Occupation unit group of main job, November 2025 (annual average of original data)

## Priority area 3: Improve training/licensing pathways

Training and assessment requirements to obtain an HV Driver's licence can be a disincentive for potential new entrants, and a substantial investment for employers. Regional access to training and licencing as well as licence age restrictions also often pose a challenge.

Holding a licence alone does not meet industry expectations of what defines a safe and productive HV Driver. A broad range of skills and knowledge must be developed through additional training, mentoring and experience.

Employer confidence in the consistency and quality of licencing and training systems means some licensed HV Drivers are not employed because employers cannot have certainty candidates have the necessary skills to operate heavy vehicles safely and efficiently.

VET funding and employer incentives vary across jurisdictions, as do designations of traineeships and apprenticeships. This makes implementation of initiatives such as a HV Driver apprenticeship difficult.

Emphasis must be placed on increasing driver trainer and mentor numbers, and a complementary program of professional development designed with this cohort in mind.

The Action Plan Program of Work will:

- Document all State/Commonwealth funding sources related to HV Drivers and make this easily available to employers and job seekers.
- Identify gaps and inconsistency in funding and training arrangements, and implement actions to address industry concerns.
- Advocate for consistent national arrangements for:
  - a national HV Driver apprenticeship
  - licencing processes and training to prepare candidates
  - building the HV Driver Trainer workforce and providing continuing professional development.
- Engage with employers to identify key factors that impact confidence in the industry's training and licencing systems, and implement a training provider capacity-building program to improve quality.
- Document and promote clear training (qualification/licence) pathways aligned to career progression.
- Develop resources to support employers to better understand and engage with the national VET system.

## Priority area 4: Retain the Drivers we have

The first three priorities in the action plan aim to improve attraction and development of a safe and efficient HV Driving workforce. However, drivers often leave the industry due to a range of issues that must be addressed to support improved retention.

Mental health is a major issue for young drivers, with 1 in 5 truck drivers under the age of 35 reporting severe psychological distress, compared with 1 in 9 Australian men in the same age group<sup>5</sup>. Issues HV Drivers encounter in their work include, but are not limited to: aggression/violence; psychosocial challenges; discrimination and bullying on worksites; poor rest stop facilities (including appropriateness for women); stringent compliance obligations that often lead to fines for minor administrative errors; turnaround and waiting times and access to facilities at load/unload points; and, treatment of drivers by customers and others.

# 1 in 5

YOUNG TRUCK DRIVERS  
REPORT SEVERE  
LEVELS OF  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
DISTRESS

The Action Plan Program of Work will:

- Continue current work in partnership with Commonwealth, State and Local Government to improve rest facilities for HV Drivers.
- Establish a national mechanism for HV Drivers to report issues encountered in their work so data-informed responses can be conceived and implemented.
- Develop and implement a suite of national resources based on HV Driver feedback, and input from experts, to support driver wellbeing, continuing professional development, career planning and satisfaction with employment.

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<sup>5</sup> van Vreden, C. et al. (2020). Driving Health Study Report No. 6: Survey of the physical and mental health of Australian professional drivers. Monash University

**Priority area 1: Elevate perceptions of the profession**

Activity	Involved*
<p><b>National communication strategy and resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the information needs of various audiences and the most effective ways to reach and inform them. Target groups to include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school students/leavers and their parents</li> <li>- unemployed job seekers, career changers and people re-entering the workforce</li> <li>- existing Transport Supply Chain workers, and workers in other sectors with transferable skills</li> <li>- people from underrepresented groups including: women, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, people with disabilities, and any other groups identified</li> <li>- teachers and careers advisers/counsellors.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop a co-ordinated national communication strategy that positively influences community perceptions and delivers consistent messages about:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- current and future opportunities across the range of HV freight, passenger and equipment types, including the implications of autonomous equipment and vehicles</li> <li>- earning potential, job security, flexibility, mobility, and self-employment opportunities</li> <li>- career and learning pathways</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Undertake an audit of existing resources and initiatives. Evaluate and consolidate content that could be used nationally.</li> <li>• Using best-practice communication techniques, produce collateral, resources and tool kits that can be implemented across a range of mediums, forums and contexts.</li> <li>• Build stronger engagement with teachers and careers advisers, improving the manner in which driving careers are described and who is targeted.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ISA</b></p> <p>Peak bodies Associations Schools</p>

\* Lead organisation/s involved each activity are shown in **bold**

**Priority area 2: Improve the supply of HV Drivers**

Activity	Involved
<b>HV Driver recruitment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building upon the work of priority area 1 and the existing work of others, develop and make available to industry a recruitment tool kit that provides advice and resources about how and where to best earmark candidates in different target groups, e.g., different age groups, females, career change, return to work, CALD people, First Nations peoples, people with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<b>ISA</b> Peak bodies Associations
<b>Skilled migration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, document and promote Skilled Migration pathways and programs currently available for industry to utilise in addressing workforce shortages.</li> <li>Liase with VETASSESS to confirm and evaluate current assessment criteria for HV Driver migration.</li> <li>Advocate for improved Skilled Migration arrangements for HV Driving occupations.</li> <li>Work with licensing and industry bodies and develop resources/programs to strengthen and standardise training and assessment requirements for migrant HV Drivers to achieve recognition of international HV licences.</li> <li>Design and implement a national program to support migrants' transition to the Australian HV Driving workforce. Subjects covered in the program should be driving skills and knowledge, industry-specific language and literacy and cultural awareness.</li> </ul>	<b>ISA</b> Peak bodies Associations Licensing bodies VETASSESS
<b>Age restrictions for HV Drivers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with jurisdictional bodies to identify possible solutions to current age restriction barriers. May include the worker being enrolled in an approved structured training program such as an apprenticeship.</li> </ul>	<b>Peak bodies</b> <b>Associations</b> Licensing bodies

Activity	Involved
<p><b>Work readiness, taster and existing worker transition programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate existing programs, and based on findings develop and make freely available national resources and implementation guidance for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VET in schools</li> <li>- HV Driver taster programs</li> <li>- School-to-work transition</li> <li>- Existing Transport Supply Chain worker transition</li> <li>- Work readiness (long-term unemployed and job seekers)</li> <li>- Transition of workers with transferable skills from other sectors, including displaced workers from declining industries and exiting defence personnel.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>ISA</b></p> <p>Peak bodies Associations RTOs Schools Employers Government</p>

**Priority area 3: Improve training/licensing pathways**

Activity	Involved
<p><b>Funding for training, VET system arrangements and employer incentives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, evaluate and document all State/Commonwealth funding related to HV Drivers. Identify gaps and inconsistency in funding and training arrangements and implement actions to address industry concerns. This will include advocacy for improved funding models including wage support for new entrants while they are in training.</li> <li>Undertake focused work, in consultation with State Training Authorities, employers, RTOs and HV Drivers to improve rollout and uptake of national HV Driver apprenticeship. This will include developing a case study on the implementation of the HV Driver apprenticeship in Queensland.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ISA</b></p> <p>Peak bodies Associations RTOs Employers Government</p>
<p><b>Improve the quality of HV Driver training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strategy to attract experienced HV Drivers to become trainers and mentors.</li> <li>Develop a national HV Driver Trainer professional development program. Explore options for industry-mandated CPD.</li> <li>Advocate for improved pension settings to encourage experienced HV Drivers to continue supporting the development of the driving workforce.</li> <li>Engage with industry bodies, employers, drivers and licensing bodies to determine what can be done to further harmonise licensing arrangements and associated training, assessment and testing practices.</li> <li>Conduct an employer survey to identify key factors that impact confidence in the training and licensing systems. Then design and implement an RTO capacity-building program to improve quality (could be linked to continuing professional development).</li> <li>Develop and promote resources to support employers and employees to better understand and engage with the national VET system. Clear training (qualification/licence) pathways aligned to career progression to be included</li> </ul>	<p><b>ISA</b></p> <p>Peak bodies Associations RTOs Employers Government</p>

**Priority area 4: Retain the Drivers we have**

Activity	Involved
<p><b>Improve HV Driver employee experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue current work in partnership with Commonwealth, State and Local Government to improve rest facilities for HV Drivers.</li> <li>• Establish a national mechanism to collect and analyse information about drivers experiences in their work (e.g. community/customer behaviour, facilities, excessive compliance requirements, etc.) so data-informed responses can be conceived and implemented.</li> <li>• Develop and make available a suite of national resources/programs based on HV Driver feedback and input from experts to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support driver wellbeing, including those returning to work after injury</li> <li>- support drivers working in areas where cost-of-living and housing pressures exist</li> <li>- facilitate continuing professional development, and career planning</li> <li>- provide information on publicly accessible amenities and facilities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Peak bodies Associations</b> Employers Government ISA</p>
Activity	Involved
<p><b>Online Employer Information Hub</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an Employer Information Hub for Transport and Supply Chain Industry employers that will serve as a 'one-stop-shop' for information on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding and incentives</li> <li>- Skilled migration pathways</li> <li>- Workforce development (how to become an employer of choice)</li> <li>- Careers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>ISA</b></p>

## ATTACHMENT 1: CURRENT INITIATIVES

Initiative	Priority Area	Owner
Employer Information Hub	1, 2, 3, 4	Industry Skills Australia (ISA)
Careers promotion Project	1	ISA
<a href="#">Career Taster program</a>	1	WA Government
<a href="#">Year13</a>	1	Year13
VET in Schools programs – School based apprenticeships and traineeships	1, 2	All State and Territory Governments
<a href="#">Tasmanian T&amp;L VET in Schools Pilot</a>	1, 2	ISA
<a href="#">Wayfinder Program</a>	1, 2	Australian Logistics Council
<a href="#">School to Work Transitions (S2WT) program</a>	1, 2	QLD Government
<a href="#">Start your Future initiative</a>	1, 2	NSW Government
<a href="#">National Career Education Strategy - Future Ready</a>	1, 2	Commonwealth Government
<a href="#">Skills NT Grants</a>	1, 2, 3	NT Government
<a href="#">Job readiness workshops initiative</a>	1, 2, 3	NSW Government
Diversity Initiatives Project	2	ISA
Cross Sectoral Skilled Migration research	2	ISA
<a href="#">Launch into work</a>	2	Commonwealth Government
<a href="#">Skilling Queenslanders for Work</a>	2	QLD Government
<a href="#">Disability Employment support</a>	2	National Disability Services
<a href="#">Diverse Queensland Workforce program</a>	2	QLD Government
<a href="#">ATA InRoads Diversity and inclusion program</a>	2	Australian Trucking Association (ATA)
<a href="#">Transport Women Australia Projects</a>	2	Transport Women Australia Limited
<a href="#">Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative (HVSI) Grants</a>	2	National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
<a href="#">National Women in Transport initiative</a>	2	National Transport Commission
<a href="#">Regional migration program (DAMA)</a>	2	Commonwealth Government
<a href="#">WiLAT Women in Logistics And transport</a>	2	Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
<a href="#">WISC Women in Supply Chain</a>	2	WISC Women in Supply Chain
<a href="#">Women Driving Transport Careers (WDTTC)</a>	2	Wodonga TAFE and Transport Women Australia Limited

Initiative	Priority Area	Owner
<a href="#">Women in Transport WiT Network</a>	2	Women in Transport
<a href="#">Local Skills Solutions program</a>	2, 3	QLD Government
<a href="#">Heavy Vehicle Training Program</a>	2, 3	VIC Government and VTA
<a href="#">VET Workforce Project</a>	3	ISA and Commonwealth Government
HV Driver Apprenticeship – QLD case study	3	ISA
Apprenticeships and Traineeships	3	All State and Territory Governments
<a href="#">Driving Townsville's Future</a>	3	Queensland Trucking Association (QTA)
<a href="#">Fee Free HV Driving Skill Set</a>	3	WA Government
<a href="#">Fee-Free TAFE</a>	3	Commonwealth Government
<a href="#">Heavy Vehicle Safe Driver</a>	3	QTA
<a href="#">Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Compact</a>	3	TAS Government and TTA
<a href="#">Heavy Vehicle Rollover Awareness Program (HVRAP)</a>	3, 4	Livestock, Bulk and Rural Carriers Association Incorporated
<a href="#">Freight Fit Program</a>	4	NSW Government
<a href="#">Healthy Heads in Trucks &amp; Sheds</a>	4	Healthy Heads in Trucks & Sheds
<a href="#">Heavy Vehicle Rest Area (HVRA) initiative</a>	4	Commonwealth Government