

19 June 2024

Heavy Vehicle Industry Australia response: National Urban Policy

Heavy Vehicle Industry Australia (HVIA) is the peak industry association for Australian manufacturers of trucks and trailers (collectively referred to as heavy vehicles), as well as the dealerships, repairers, suppliers, and service providers that support the entire industry. We represent almost every major truck manufacturer/importer, all of Australia’s major trailer manufacturers, and an ever-growing list of their component, equipment and technology providers.

Our 300-plus corporate members collectively employ a local workforce of over 70,000 staff. Our member's interests cover an extensive range of vehicles, starting with 3.5-tonne light commercial trucks, and extending all the way up to Australia's unique 50-metre long, 100-tonne road trains.

Our industry provides some of the world’s most efficient, safe, innovative, and technologically advanced vehicles. HVIA seeks to work with government and industry stakeholders to promote an innovative and prosperous industry that supports a safe and productive heavy vehicle fleet operating for the benefit of all Australians.

The growing freight task will impact national urban policy

The urgency in considering the heavy vehicle fleet as it relates to urban policy is apparent when considering the future domestic freight task. Between 2020 – 2050, road freight is projected to grow by 77%, whereas rail, air, and shipping may not grow as rapidly. The total freight task is predicted to reach 964 billion tonne-kilometres (btkm) by 2050 from its current level of 765 btkm (see Figure 1).

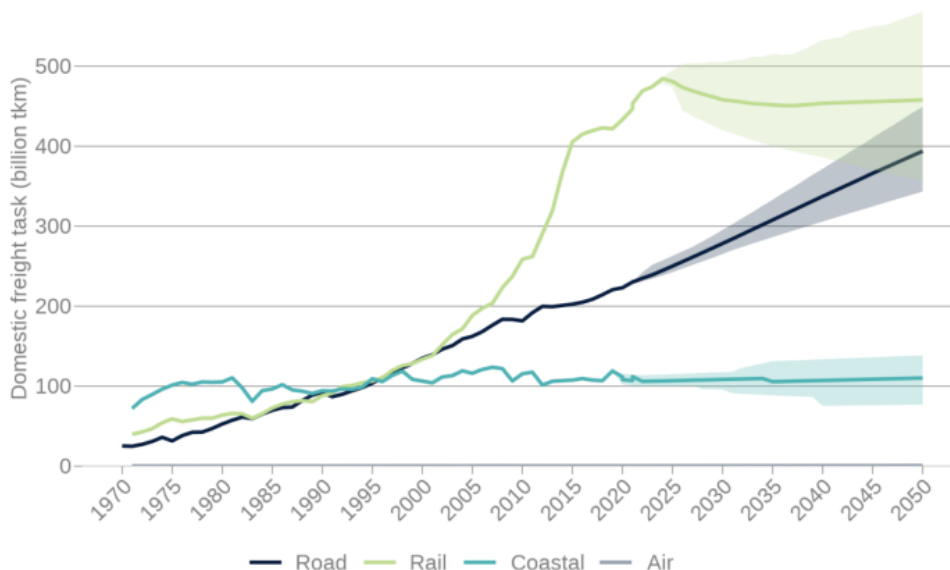


Figure 1: Actual and projected future freight task by major transport mode (source: BITRE, 2020)

Sustainable urban environments must be able to provide residents with their everyday needs. This requires a freight transport network that links key nodes, which include shopping areas, industrial

hubs, and ports. To maximize productivity and safety, and minimise emissions and congestion, it is advantageous for those nodes to be serviced by road networks that facilitate the movement of High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFVs) between them. Achieving that first requires urban policies and plans facilitating those networks and protecting them from encroachment by the urban development they seek to serve.

The changing purchasing behaviours of consumers and the fact that an increasing proportion of shopping is done online means the freight task – in particular, and relevant for urban environments, the first and last mile delivery – will continue to grow. As an increased domestic freight task will result in more vehicles on the road, it is important to consider strategies for improving congestion on urban roads.

One such strategy includes spreading the traffic congestion load more effectively across day and night hours. Presently, many urban areas enforce nighttime truck curfews for key freight routes, due to noise concerns. Those curfews could be readily lifted for vehicles that emit less noise, such as current low- and zero emission battery electric, and fuel cell vehicles.

HVIA RECOMMENDS:

- including the needs of HPFVs in urban planning policies
- specifically catering for the needs of HPFVs in the development of urban areas, including key freight nodes (e.g. shopping areas, industrial hubs, and ports)
- waiving curfews for noise reduced vehicles (e.g. low and net zero emission vehicles) in urban areas.

Reducing heavy vehicle emissions

Support and acknowledgement of the role of heavy vehicles in the transition to net zero is vital. We have the opportunity to get the policy, regulatory, and strategic settings correct from the outset, rather than scrambling to incorporate heavy vehicles into a future designed with only light net zero vehicles in mind. It is important that policies, including those focused on urban environments, also factor in heavy vehicles.

Trucks generally have long life cycles and Australia's ageing fleet is one of the oldest in the developed world. Because of their typically fine margins, truck operators need a compelling business case with as few barriers as possible to justify investment in new vehicles, particularly as next-generation vehicles are significantly more expensive and may require additional units given the technical pay-load penalty. Certainty for charging and refuelling will be necessary to remove any concerns about range anxiety for potential operators of net zero vehicles.

On freight routes, or in areas with increased commercial / delivery requirements, plans for vehicle related infrastructure must consider the ability of heavy vehicles to access chargers and refuelling. Whilst 'back to base' recharging is often a preferred model for operators of electric trucks, there will be times that charging is necessary on delivery routes. It is important that the increased size of heavy vehicles is considered to ensure all can be accommodated.

HVIA RECOMMENDS:

- considering freight routes and high frequency delivery areas when planning electric vehicle charging infrastructure and alternative refuelling.

HVIA is working closely with the federal and state governments on freight strategies and net zero policies. We recommend that the drafters of the National Urban Policy consider these recommendations, as well as our recommendations in the Transport and Infrastructure Net Zero Roadmap and Action Plan, and the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy. We would be happy to provide these submissions once they are finalised.

We are happy to provide further information on anything included in this submission, or more generally as it pertains to heavy vehicles. You can reach our Chief Advocacy Officer, Adele Lausberg, here: a.lausberg@hvia.asn.au.

Yours sincerely,



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