

**HARMONISING OF MOTOR VEHICLE
REGULATIONS WITHIN AUSTRALIA
THE ACT EXPERIENCE**

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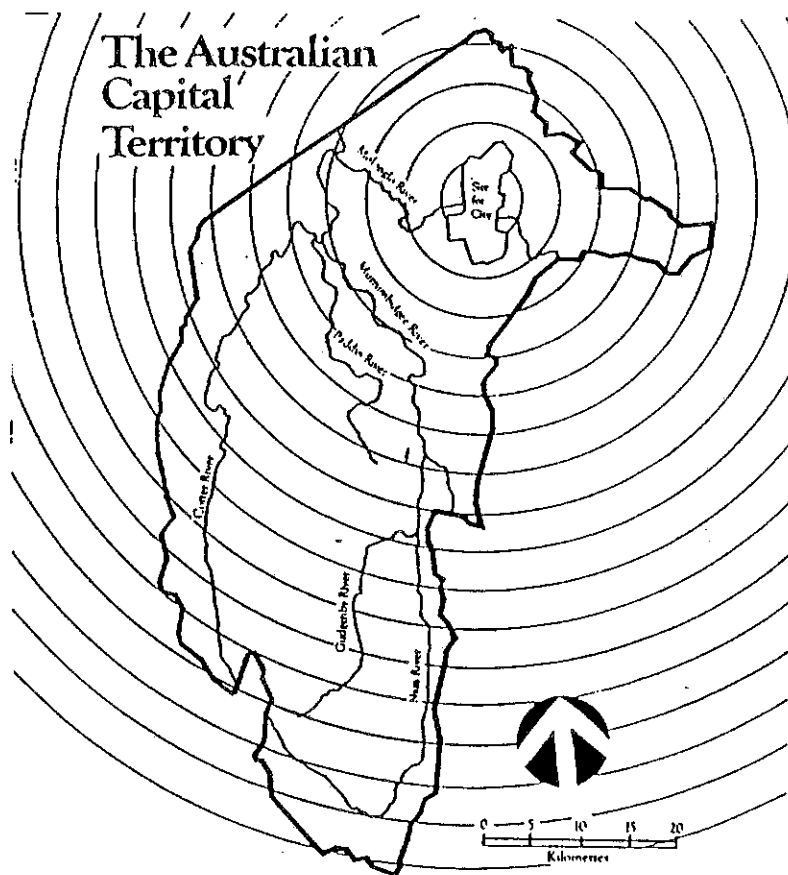
**Presented to the
Institute of Road Transport Engineers of New Zealand
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE SEMINAR**

AUCKLAND

3 - 5 March 1992

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Harmonising motor vehicle regulations within Australia - The Australian Capital Territory's experience

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Introduction

I am the manager of a technical standards area and the vehicle inspection stations operated by the Australian Capital Territory [ACT] Government. This paper presents my experiences with the Federal, State and Territory consultation procedures that are part of the processes of developing national vehicle standards. This paper also describes the workplace issues that are a consequence of harmonising motor vehicle regulations.

Background on the ACT:

The ACT was created in 1908 to be the site of Australia's National Capital. That decision created an unique place in the Australian Constitution for the Territory. The ACT's capital is Canberra, a planned city that is the show place of the Federal Government. In 1989, the ACT attained Self Government.

The ACT is wholly contained within the State of New South Wales.

The ACT's area is 2,359 square kilometres, compared with New South Wales' 801,431 square kilometres.

The ACT population was estimated at 284,000 on 30 June 1990; New South Wales estimated population was 5.8 million.

The ACT, had 187,513 vehicles registered on 30 January 1992; New South Wales had 3,732,392.

As you can conclude, the ACT is a small player compared with New South Wales in the numbers game.

Our Territory's legislation base is also different from New South Wales' as its history as a federally administered and planned national capital might suggest. Compared with other States, the ACT has quite divergent practices and procedures in registration matters. For example, a vehicle owner in New South Wales can nominate to register his vehicle for private or commercial purposes, with a corresponding fee; whereas the ACT categorizes the vehicle, and charges common rates for particular types of units. The ACT charges also reflect a vehicle's tare mass rather than gross vehicle mass, which is used by many of the States.

The ACT Government has allowed processes dependent on its geographic size and small vehicle population to exist in the Territory. The prime example is the continuation of a periodic vehicle inspection program, based on two Government-run vehicle inspection stations.

Until recently the Territory's geographic size and small vehicle population also meant that vehicle axle mass regulations and enforcement were not considered necessary. This occurred because the cost-to-benefit ratio was poorly defined, and was considered insufficient to guide the necessary legislation through the federally based Government of the day.

Prior to Self Government, the ACT community was generally dependent on the Federal Government. Self Government gave rise to a new community drive to which ACT politicians and my employer (the ACT Government Service) have had to respond. Considerable budget restraints were also imposed on the new ACT Government by the Federal Government.

As a consequence, our Territory's Government is very cost conscious and considers that uniformity and leanness of Government are important for ensuring the ACT is equipped for the future.

Issues:

Why do the motor industry, user groups and regulatory authorities want uniform regulations?

The motor industry wants uniform regulations to save costs, and to improve international competitiveness; the user groups want uniform regulations to improve product choice, lower prices, improve safety and to address the environmental issues, associated with the vehicle industry; and the regulatory authorities are under pressure to adopt uniform practices from those groups and to improve operational efficiency in their own organisations.

MOTOR INDUSTRY HISTORY

In 1985 articles on the 20th FISITA [1] congress, it was reported that the keynote paper was "Global challenges for the automotive industry". This paper was written by the President of General Motors Corporation, Mr James McDonald.

In Mr McDonald's paper he made reference to the globalised automobile industry. He wrote that the oil shortage and forecasted oil prices in the US had coupled with the global recession and intense expansion by the Japanese to create a new set of ground rules and a global playing field.

Mr McDonald suggested that in 1985 the alliances between producers, and inter-continental production sharing were almost being taken for granted. He further suggested that, after banking, the automotive industry was the first international business. [SAE-Australasia Jan/Feb 1985].

The Executive Vice-President Finance and Planning, Toyota Motor Corporation Australia, Norman Iddles, reported in an article in the SAE-Australasia Journal of September/October 1991, that "1988 had been a watershed year for Australia's car manufacturers, we witnessed the beginnings of a new order in a word globalisation".

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The internationalisation of the Australian car industry had occurred due to the implementation of the Australian Federal Government's policy, commonly known as the Button Plan. The need for economic reform in the motor vehicle industry was clearly stated and mapped out in that plan.

In May 1984, Senator Button, the Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, announced a plan for the Australian car manufacturing industry which would encourage major rationalisation and restructuring to increase volumes and reduce costs. This policy dropped import quotas and programmed the reduction of protection tariffs, initially at 57.5%, down to 15% by the year 2000.

Increased economies of scale would be achieved and increased exports expected with greater levels of standardisation of components and technical requirements. This opened the way for world cars into and out of Australia. Early examples of world cars were the Mazda 323 and the local variant by Ford Australia, the Laser. More recently the Toyota Corolla, and Holden Nova were being marketed. Of course some manufacturers have only ever built models for the world markets, for example, BMW. General Motors Holden's Calibra is another vehicle considered a world car as it is designed and built in Germany and marketed in Europe, Japan and Australia. A vehicle achieving market penetration in America which is built in Australia is the Laser-based Ford Capri.

1 FISITA - Federation Internationale des Societes d'Ingenieurs des Techniques de l'Automobile.

The 1984 Button Plan has been revised by Federal Government and the resulting Automotive Industry Plan to the year 2000 has been released. The objective of this revised plan is to allow development of an Australian automotive industry which is viable and internationally competitive. The expectation is to provide higher quality vehicles at lower real prices to the Australian consumer. The basis for achieving this is further industry reforms and reducing the remaining tariffs on imports. A system of export facilitation, based on earning credits from local content and labour added to exports, allows a scaled reduction in duty on imported automotive products.

MOTOR INDUSTRY RESPONSE

To the Australian vehicle manufacturing industry the challenge was, and still is, to compete successfully internationally or to cease to be a manufacturing entity in Australia. Nissan announced the impending closure of its Australian vehicle manufacturing plant in February this year. This leaves Nissan as an importer to Australia, except for carrying out some component manufacturing. Australia produces only around one percent of the global car production, so it is unlikely that the industry will be able to provide an indigenous vehicle in the longer term due to the huge development costs associated with vehicle design.

Research and development is the way to safer and more environmentally friendly vehicles. The way to finance the huge capital outlays required for research and development is demonstrated by the international movements of the manufacturing industries. For example Fiat Geotech, in one of its latest international moves, acquired 80% of Ford-New Holland, the Ford agricultural and industrial arm. This transaction alone moves the new company into the world's top three agricultural and industrial equipment manufacturers and distributors.

When advertising the resulting new company, N.H. Geotech, the Fiat Group told how, a few years ago, no-one would have questioned a large well-known product's ability to survive. But, the reality of today's market has seen some fail and others become severely threatened. They indicated how the new company gained strength from larger production and sales volumes, and the greater resources available for product development.

This is a good example of how global companies are responding to market pressures; with huge take-over transactions, joint ventures, rationalised research and development of markets and products, and diversification of income sources. This has resulted in giant conglomerate companies with greater involvement in many different operations that are able to grow and to afford to develop new products in these tough times.

World motor cars are a simple flow-on of the economies of scale which the multinational companies provide. World cars are more cost-effective. If the number of market variants is as low as possible, it allows resources to be channelled into meeting consumer demanded variations, rather than regulatory requirements. The increasingly tougher international economic

climate only focuses these pressures further. Australia's economic climate demands competitive products for world markets if its manufacturing industry intends surviving. International standards can assist the survival process, although at times they seem to place short term burdens on some manufacturers and may even make small companies close.

USER GROUPS

I believe that there are many significant factors in the continuing pressure on regulatory bodies towards uniform standards and practices. Motor vehicle users are a significant pressure group, influencing the regulatory bodies. A sample of the user pressure groups are:

- . the trucking operators looking for common inservice regulations and reduced charges;
- . environmental lobby groups demanding that vehicles be more environment friendly;
- . motoring organisations seeking safer vehicles with improved theft resistance and common road regulations,
- . and motoring writers on behalf of the public, demanding higher technology, faster, better handling and more fuel-efficient vehicles.

TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

The Australian trucking industry lobby has strong feelings and has demonstrated their beliefs in a series of truck road blocks aimed at getting their demands met. Those blockades in 1979 were directed at the road taxes charged by the State Governments. These road taxes date back to the 1930s and their single purpose, when introduced, was to protect the government railways from road competition.

The trucking industry's demands for a Government policy aimed at common heavy vehicle regulations between the Australian States grew out of the earlier blockades.

A Federal Interstate Registration Scheme for vehicles operating solely between States and not carrying out intra-state operations, was a partial solution to some of the trucking industry's issues. Although designed primarily to address cost recovery issues, the scheme has allowed the introduction of certain national regulations. This scheme started in 1985, and is still operating.

MOTORING ORGANISATIONS

Motoring organisations have lobbied successfully for many improvements to road user safety and Government road revenues to be returned to the roads infrastructure or road-user education.

In 1989, the Australian Automobile Association made submissions and spoke in public on the need for more road funding expenditure, when the combination of some rather newsworthy heavy vehicle and bus crashes in Australia was a major issue. The Australian Automobile Association's 1991 Annual Report presents clear statements of policy on environmental issues; vehicle theft matters, and the land transport reform process. The land transport reform process was one of the main agenda items in a series of Special Premiers' Conferences aimed at micro-economic reform in Australia.

The Association was very supportive of the land transport reform package adopted at the Special Premiers' Conference in July 1991. Their annual report states "The establishment of a national registration, regulation and charging scheme for heavy vehicles and a National Rail Corporation, should go a long way towards achieving a more equitable, efficient and integrated system of land transport."

The lobby power of the Australian Automobile Association is recognised when, as stated in their annual report, they spoke on land transport issues to not only the Federal Government but also senior Federal Department of Transport and Communications staff, and the Opposition's Back Bench Committee on Transport and Communications. Included in the Association's discussions were demands that road expenditure be maintained in real terms at least, and that light vehicles be included in the national registration and regulation scheme.

PRIME MINISTER'S TEN POINT PLAN

Another significant move towards uniform regulation was the Prime Ministers "Ten Point Plan". In 1989 the Federal Government offered special road funding grants for all States, if they all agreed to implement a 10 point plan of national road safety initiative.

These initiatives were:

- 1] uniform vehicle driver blood alcohol concentration levels,
- 2] a national licensing system for heavy truck and bus drivers,
- 3] uniform speed limits,
- 4] speed-limiters on heavy vehicles with some retrofitting back to 1988,
- 5] an essentially zero blood-alcohol content for drivers of heavy trucks, buses, and for drivers with less than three years experience and who are under 25 years,
- 6] increased random breath-testing to achieve a ratio of testing 1:4 drivers per annum,
- 7] a graduated licensing system for young drivers,

- 8] compulsory helmet wearing by cyclists (motorised and non-motorised),
- 9] daylight running lights on all new motorcycles, and
- 10] increased enforcement of the usage of seat-belts and child restraints.

The interesting thing from a vehicle standards point of view was the retrospective nature of the speed-limiting requirements. Normal Australian practice is to implement vehicle standards from a future implementation date, and this is expected to remain standard practice.

LAND TRANSPORT REFORM PROCESS: SPECIAL PREMIERS' CONFERENCE

Since the time that the 10 point plan was determined, a special series of conferences have been held, aimed at reforming inter-government relations to achieve a more efficient and competitive Australia. These conferences involved the Australian heads of Government from the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

These conferences resulted in a number of road transport improvement initiatives, as the latest step in a long series of reports on the matter. They started with the National Road Freight Industry Inquiry and were followed by a series of substantial Inter State Commission reports on road costs, charging, and uniformity, from 1986 to 1990. The importance of the Special Premiers' Conferences is that they involve acceptance at the highest political level of the reforms.

Included in the work program of these conferences are significant political determinations to achieve micro-economic and regulatory reform in the road and rail transport industries. To achieve these goals a series of investigative committees was formed and the National Road Transport Commission [NRTC] and the National Rail Corporation established.

So far, achievements include a signed agreement from almost all jurisdictions to establish a national heavy vehicle registration, regulation and charging scheme. The Northern Territory supported the establishment of the NRTC and uniform regulations, but didn't sign the agreement due to concerns over the proposed level of road user charges. This agreement empowers the new Commission to regulate heavy vehicles on a national basis and to develop the charging scheme. A two zone charging system is proposed with revised charges applying from 1 January 1993.

Immediate action plans, included:

- 1] linking of existing motor registries to allow automatic exchange of defect notices;
- 2] a simplified number plate system;
- 3] development of the registration procedures for national registration of heavy vehicles by July 1992;

- 4] agreement for uniform inservice and new construction vehicle requirements;
- 5] traffic, loading and permit codes for heavy vehicles;
- 6] vehicle roadworthiness and inspection standards;
- 7] drivers licence standards and practices;
- 8] enforcement standards, and performance targets and sanctions.

The November 1991 meeting of the Premiers and Chief Ministers endorsed the development of a national registration scheme and uniform regulations including a national traffic code applicable to all areas and all vehicles.

National B double routes are an early bonus of the Special Premiers' Conference agreements. National B double routes bring about significant road transport infrastructure improvements as the B double is an inherently more efficient and safe vehicle. The inherent efficiencies of these combination vehicles are increased by allowing them free interstate movement on nationally agreed routes.

Fundamental ground rules for the Special Premiers' Conferences reforms include uniform regulations, charges and practices based on asset protection and user-pays principles. These ground rules are consistent with other Federal Government micro-economic reform initiatives.

What are the problems for the regulatory authorities?

The problems of uniform regulations include loss of discretionary revenue (collected currently as part of registration charges); loss of discretionary powers; distancing of individual client needs; and the actual system of regulation. Some examples of individual problems that occur for registering authorities are discussed below.

Sugar cane farmers needing to move their harvest product on the roads have been given special dispensation in the past. While this is a local issue, it may be affected by the national registration of the vehicles involved.

Currently, to change a vehicle's normal garaging address across a State or Territory border (as part of a business or private move) involves the owner in a process of cancelling the existing registration and entering into the various processes for registration with the new State or Territory. Almost all States and Territories have different processes and procedures and, of course, costs. This leads to confusion, and non-compliance.

Driving a heavy vehicle across borders is equally confusing, as different mass limits apply and speed limits in New South Wales are limited to below posted limits for certain configurations of normal freight vehicles.

Vehicles and loads that exceed the various legal allowances in each state require special permits. These permits may specify particular escort vehicle requirements, travel speeds and routes. Each permit had a prescribed fee. To move a large load across Australia would involve obtaining permits and meeting the individual permit conditions from each state involved.

The 1985 Review of Road and Vehicle Limits report addressed these mass, dimension and permit issues. This review resulted in several recommendations, but lacked the political commitment to succeed as the adoption of some of the recommendations would have affected the incomes of some States. These States had adopted a system of significant permit charges to allow heavier than their standard axle load to be used. For this reason the full benefits of the Review of Road and Vehicle Limits were not obtained, but this has now been successfully pursued through the Special Premiers' Conferences initiatives.

The move to change registering authorities' work practices while also seeking to reduce the organisations' size, is setting high goals for the individual managers and staff involved. As long established practices are being replaced with new practices that are developed nationally, the lack of involvement of operational staff and resulting lack of staff commitment to the changes are clearly likely to cause management problems.

The fundamental and very significant changes proposed include a charging regime based on fuel taxes and using a common methodology across all authorities which will affect many organisations and individual staff members. These fundamental changes raise a number of issues yet to be resolved, including data conversion, collection, and exchange; especially given the geographical problems that some authorities face.

One experience with data transfer and exchange worthy of comment was the attempt to introduce and operate a vehicle identification number [VIN] register for all vehicles supplied to the Australian market after a determined date. This VIN system was to prevent the re-registration of a stolen vehicle with altered identifiers. The system is still not truly operational after several years.

The problems found in the ACT have included faults in the decode checking system that prevented correct numbers from being accepted by our computer system. Landline transfer data was often confused when the data was converted from the transferring micro computer to the main system.

Several of the registration authorities in Australia have developed new computer systems in the last two years to suit their own business rules. None of these systems are compatible and are going to require significant redesign to cater for national registration business rules and practices. A national

automatic electronic exchange of registration data is even more difficult, yet now more desirable than ever, with the current move towards uniformity and data transfer.

The typical problem for Australian States is our vast distances and sparse population. However there are centres of high population that create different problems. These problems lead to registration and vehicle standards enforcement needs which can be met by agents. Agency operation places audit demands on the State rather than service demands. The ACT only recently began to feel the effects of high demand in a populated centre, and has no distance problem. We have a limited agency service for vehicle inspection and none for registration. The integration and adaptation of the ACT's centralised processes into new national processes will be a problem to be overcome.

CHALLENGES FOR THE ACT IN HARMONISING REGULATIONS

The loss of discretionary revenue will be a real issue for all States and Territories, as the redistribution of Federal funding grants provided to the States is the driving force for many of the Special Premiers' Conference initiatives. The ACT currently places all discretionary revenue into a general revenue fund. If, as it currently appears, the national processes are going to return registration funds to the States and Territories, based on road asset protection, a number of problems arise. Identifying the asset value and, hence, maintenance needs relative to vehicle usage of the asset are significant issues.

Meeting the vehicle standards needs of the ACT community and some regional interests under national standards is an interesting challenge. A specific regional need includes a process to cater effectively for rally cars, as the larger States do not cater nearly as well for rally cars as the ACT does.

We legally register four types of rally cars from the club level racer to the fully sponsored race car. The ACT needs the income car rallying brings to it. To ensure the sport's future in the ACT, we have to assure car rallyers that current privileges for rally cars will continue.

The ACT's Registrar of Motor Vehicles has considerable discretionary power under the current ACT Motor Traffic Act, but under a national scheme, that level of discretion may not continue. Currently the Registrar can use his discretion to take account of a particular individual's needs. Once the national scheme is in place the ability to meet an individual's need outside the standards may be lost.

Many of the ACT's practices are based in history and changing them will cause problems. For example the Territory has based its registration charges on tare weight. This may be related to the fact that road infrastructure costs were largely covered by the Federal Government until self-government was introduced three years ago.

The difficulties of changing to a registration charging regime based on axle weights have precluded this move so far. However under self-government, the ACT now competes with the States for road grants and we need to protect our existing road assets. User-pays charging based on mass and distance is rapidly becoming necessary. The uniform national processes are appearing to offer the incentive to change and the political determination to make the changes.

What has been happening so far with vehicle standards?

TRENDS IN THE AUSTRALIAN DESIGN RULES

The Australian Transport Advisory Council in 1986, agreed that all future standards in the Australian Design Rule [ADR] system should be based on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [ECE] regulations unless significant reasons existed not to. [*SAE Australia Nov/Dec 1986*]

The effect of this decision is only now beginning to show in the Australian vehicle industry. The complexities of the recent ADR lighting packages, aimed at aligning with ECE regulations, are still being resolved. In February 1992, a series of seminars on the ECE lighting packages in the ADRs have been requested from the Federal Office of Road Safety by the States and Territories, as much of our industry, and many regulatory staff, are having difficulty with these requirements.

These problems resulted in the ACT and other registering authorities accepting compliance with the spirit of the lighting ADRs, rather than demonstrating compliance with the letter of the ADRs for light trailers and truck bodies.

National uniformity was further advanced in September 1989 by the introduction of the Federal Motor Vehicle Standards Act which affected the importation into Australia of all on-road motor vehicles whether new or second-hand. This Act has power until a vehicle is first used in transport, and gives the ADR system status as the primary vehicle standards legislation in the country. However, as the ADR system is an incomplete set of standards, a number of problems are still being resolved. For instance, a vehicle designed for developing countries was imported to Australia, and because of the deficiencies in the ADR's, was quite correctly granted approval to fit an ADR Compliance Plate. This was despite the fact that none of the registration authorities considered it a suitable vehicle for the Australian market for a number of safety and traffic interface reasons.

This created a circumstance where a vehicle with compliance plate approval was rejected for registration in a number of jurisdictions which could have resulted in difficult legal battles. Significant workloads arose to resolve the discrepancy at State and Territory levels. On the Federal level, a special package of amendments to the ADRs is being developed as a result of this problem.

THE ACT'S REACTION TO THE ADR CHANGES

The ADR rules have become very dynamic and complex as alignment with the ECE regulations has progressed. To overcome the effects of this change has had in the ACT, I have been actively pursuing a policy of adopting the State requirements most likely to become the basis of a national standard. I took this short cut because the ACT is unable to support sufficient technical staff to constantly update its technical requirements as the ADRs change. As you may well understand, the complexity and legal correctness of the ADRs make inservice use of the document very difficult. However inservice regulations usually require continued compliance with the ADRs.

To provide the enforcement/inspectorial groups with plain English interpretations of the ADRs is a very difficult and expensive job. Field personnel with all other authorities and some manufacturers are experiencing similar problems.

There are difficulties interpreting and complying with the new ADR lighting requirements in the light trailer industry. The ACT began to enforce the first ADR on light trailers from the published introduction date. These ADRs called up two major design requirements when first released: load sharing suspension, and brakes on all wheels. The small ACT trailer supply industry was able to comply and did so. However, due to enforcement difficulties experienced by other States and the federal authority, the ACT rapidly found that it had disadvantaged its own industry base by applying the ADR requirements. So we removed these two design requirements for most trailers under two tonne aggregate trailer mass [ATM].

Trailers under two tonne ATM with close-coupled axles were exempt from load-sharing suspension. All trailers under two tonne ATM were only required to have an efficient brake system, and were allowed to operate the brakes by trailer over run. This particular requirement took the ACT standards back by over 16 years. It is very noteworthy that an efficient brake system as applied to trailers is not defined under the ADR system. In order that we did not further disadvantage the ACT trailer industry, those lower standards were accepted.

International Trucks Australia released Body Builders' Guidelines, incorporating a plain English and diagrammatic interpretation of the latest ADR lighting package, to its dealers. This package is designed to ensure vehicle compliance with the relevant ADRs. The Manager Product Planning, International Trucks Australia, Mr Creagh, author of that guide

provided each registration authority with a copy. Information sharing between manufacturers, and authorities must be encouraged as it assists greatly in reducing interpretation problems at the time of registration, or in vehicle inspection during service.

The registration authorities are also demonstrating a level of cooperation not previously demonstrated, as they strive to provide the appropriate transport regulations, despite an ever tightening budget.

CO-OPERATION IN VEHICLE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

A prime example of this co-operation is the formation and successful operation of a committee, chaired by the Federal Office of Road Safety, to develop uniform standards for modified and rebodied vehicles. So far this committee has released two significant codes of practice. One covers left-hand-drive to right-hand-drive steering conversion, and the other addresses the manufacture and installation of additional seats for motor vehicles.

Codes under development include those covering campervans, individually constructed vehicles, and two series providing practices for vehicle modification by industry. The first and most advanced series covers modification codes for heavy vehicles. It has been released for industry comment and was the work of Queensland and Victoria, towards industry-based modification control.

The second set of codes is for light vehicle modification, which is being developed with contributions from all States and Territories using selected State requirements as a base. The ACT is authoring a code section on alternative wheels and tyres, while other States are working concurrently on different sections to avoid duplication of effort.

National roadworthiness standards, and on-road defect processes are being developed as part of the project work being co-ordinated by AUSTROADS, formerly the National Association of Australian State Road Authorities, for the new National Roads Transport Commission [NRTC]. These projects will develop recommendations to be put to the NRTC on the business rules and standards that will be applicable to heavy vehicles initially, but are very likely to eventually apply to all roads vehicles operating within Australia.

From my experience so far with these projects, while the political desire to move is strong, the actual ability to achieve significant reform is much harder. It is a challenge to ensure that the committees work on the fundamental issues, such as which are the best solutions on a national level, and are not distracted by detailed technical matters. The existence of a project co-ordination group does assist in ensuring the best solutions rather than the easy ones. I believe that it is important for the committees to provide consensus solutions in their recommendations to the NRTC.

VEHICLE ROADWORTHINESS IN THE ACT

The ACT has been considering its options given the likelihood that national roadworthiness standards and vehicle inspection performance targets will be implemented. Its current Government run periodic inspection program has been modified over a number of years to cope with increasing demand. The number of vehicles registered in the ACT has been growing at a steady 3 to 4% per year average growth over the last 20 years and because resources to operate the system have been held static, modifications to the process have been introduced.

These modifications have been to limit the number of vehicles inspected to around 130,000 per year. We achieved this by granting some vehicles exemption from annual inspection. Vehicles currently granted exemption are all passenger carrying and very light goods vehicles under six years of age, except for a 1:20 randomly selected sample. We have also commenced operation of some joint on-road activities with the police force aimed at either particular trouble spots, or to gather information on the roadworthiness of vehicles, with a particular interest in the effects of the exemption from inspection of some vehicles and the use of periodic inspection for the others. Results so far are encouraging, indicating less than 8% of the light vehicle fleet may be unroadworthy. The very heavy vehicle fleet which regularly operates into New South Wales has been found to have very few defects and, usually has been subject to a recent New South Wales random road side inspection.

However, up to 50% of medium to heavy vehicles, operating mostly in the ACT were found to have defects. Many of these defects were significant items, such as brakes and steering.

The use of periodic inspections, in previous years, without some form of random on-road presence in the ACT, would account for these results. The proposed national business rules for vehicle regulation allow for the need to use agency services, found in most States. These agency services can include self regulation, by fleet operators, under the proposed business rules. The concept of fleet operators running quality assurance based programs of self regulation in the areas of vehicle roadworthiness, and even mass limits, is a real possibility to be considered from an overall transport efficiency perspective. There is potential for real operator gains under a quality assurance system as demonstrated by many industries within Australia and other parts of the world.

Companies operating quality assurance processes associated with vehicle roadworthiness would only be subject to some form of audit control, and the assumption for inservice use would be compliance with the regulations. This would allow the regulators and enforcement agencies to concentrate their efforts on other vehicles.

However as demonstrated in the ACT, when regulating the taxi industry, self regulation can have significant problems. In the ACT, each taxi is subject to the controlling co-operative's own checks. However, the standards applied tend to vary, as does the co-operation received when assistance is requested to locate a particular vehicle that we have a problem with. The single biggest influence on the quality of the taxi fleet in the ACT has been the random rank-based inspections. It has been important to have the correct level of enforcement, too much and the operators rely on detection before taking action; too little and the quality of some cabs slips. Hence the current, and by far most effective method, is to target inspections based on previous history. I do not consider targeting unfair or a matter for concern. History has shown that some operators will always comply with the taxi regulations, while others will always try to take advantage by operating under the line. Why waste effort on the good operators when there are real concerns with the others? I find that this example offers good evidence that thoughtfully targeted inspections are a solution to maximising results with minimal effort.

The future:

NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE REGULATION

As part of a national strategy to promote micro-economic reform, Australia expects to see national registration of heavy vehicles this year. It is possible that such registration could be available from July. This process will place the Australian transport industry in a new environment with uniform regulations and costs based on two primary zones. To further promote efficiency, supporting processes are also being made uniform and, hopefully, rationalised. The reciprocal recognition of vehicle roadworthiness inspections, permits and defects are examples of these supporting processes. The ACT will find meeting these changes challenging and productive in the longer term.

The concept of roadworthiness inspection programs based on performance targets will be a personal challenge I will face as the operational manager for the ACT's existing periodic inspection program. I expect to see changes to the existing program to meet the performance-based criteria, as the problems of meeting the targets with a centralised inspection process are addressed.

I believe our experiences so far with on-road inspection exercises have given us valuable information from which our future directions can be determined. Agency service for vehicle inspection, if correctly controlled, has potential. However, if poorly controlled, it can become totally ineffective. Quality assurance processes offer a solution, but must be subject to

audit and even recall, when applied to vehicle inspection. Such processes are also good in that the responsibility for roadworthiness remains with the vehicle owner/driver, and is not accepted by the registration authority, as is often implied with periodic centralised inspection programs.

ON-LINE INFORMATION ACCESS

To achieve these national initiatives, efficient development of on-line information sharing will have to occur. Earlier attempts at on-line information sharing has had mixed success. For example the national VIN's register, which all States and Territories, vehicle manufacturers and importers were going to access on-line as vehicles were manufactured, and subsequently registered or re-registered, is still not fully operational after nearly three years. Most of the ACT's problems will be overcome with our new computer system, but significant decoding and data transfer problems are still evident.

The different business rules of the past in each State and Territory has led to different Mainframe computer systems. The time delay before true on-line access is achieved, will be significant, unless a national data base is established. I expect to see data transfer of individual vehicle records to the new "garaging address" States' register in the very near future.

EXTENSION OF NATIONAL REGULATION TO ALL VEHICLES AND DRIVERS

Once the national heavy vehicle registration system is operational I expect to see an expansion of the scheme to encompass all vehicles. The driving force for this extension will be the problems associated with vehicles in the boundary areas between heavy and light vehicles. Under present suggested fees and charges, goods vehicles over 4.5 tonne gross vehicle mass will attract a fee, based on a diesel fuel charge, below current fees for a typical passenger car. However, not all vehicles over 4.5 tonne gross vehicle mass are diesel fuelled, and problems arise with registration of heavy goods vehicles running on petrol or gas. A flow-on of the heavy vehicle uniformity moves is likely to include a national traffic code to apply to all vehicles and drivers.

The Federal Government's policy is to provide a competitive base from which the Australian automotive and manufacturing industry will operate. This will demand a more international set of the vehicle design regulations within Australia. The direct impact of this sees the current Australian Design Rules blossoming into an internationally harmonised document wherever possible.

A further increase in the development of world vehicles, through international badge engineering or joint ventures to manufacture and market vehicles, is likely. Many manufacturers will move in this direction, as they seek to spread their manufacturing base around the world looking for the individual advantages and specialities of each country or manufacturing plant.

Conclusion

The Australian vehicle regulation and charging system is undergoing a period of significant and fundamental change. The ACT is a full partner in this national micro-economic reform process.

I see the ACT also continuing to promote uniformity to gain operational cost savings and local and regional transport efficiency. The ACT has shown it is prepared to be flexible and realises it may have to lower its standards on some issues as a result.

The ACT will continue to support the ADR system which encourages on-going safety and environmental improvements in the vehicles operating within its borders.

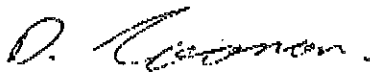
The ACT values harmonisation of transport regulations, and this is an important part of my areas 1991/1995 corporate plan.

CLOSE

Thank you for the opportunity to present my interpretation of the ACT's experiences in harmonisation of vehicle standards.

Please note that these are my views and opinions and not necessarily those of the ACT Government.

Thank you also to the IRTE, my department and any of my staff that were involved, for their support while preparing for and in presenting this paper.



David Coonan
March 1992

NATIONAL



B-DOUBLE ROUTES

"THE FUTURE"



**UNIFORM AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS
AND AN IMPROVED ROAD
TRANSPORT INDUSTRY**

INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR UNIFORM
REGULATIONS

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS FOR
THE
REGULATORY AUTHORITIES ?

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING SO
FAR
WITH VEHICLE STANDARDS ?

THE FUTURE !

THE TEN POINT PLAN

1

**NATIONALLY UNIFORM
VEHICLE DRIVER BLOOD ALCOHOL
CONCENTRATION LEVELS**

2

**A NATIONAL LICENSING SYSTEM
FOR HEAVY TRUCK AND BUS
DRIVERS**

3

UNIFORM SPEED LIMITS

4

**SPEED LIMITERS ON HEAVY
VEHICLES WITH SOME
RETROFITTING
BACK TO 1988**

5

ZERO BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL FOR
HEAVY VEHICLE DRIVERS AND
SOME DRIVERS UNDER 25

6

INCREASED RANDOM BREATH
TESTING

7

A NATIONAL GRADUATED
LICENSING SYSTEM FOR YOUNG
DRIVERS

8

COMPULSORY WEARING OF
HELMETS FOR CYCLISTS

9

MOTORCYCLE DAY TIME RUNNING
LIGHTS

10

FURTHER ENFORCEMENT IN
THE USE OF SEAT
BELTS AND
CHILD RESTRAINTS

**WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS FOR
THE REGULATORY AUTHORITIES ?**

1

**THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES
NEEDED FOR INTEGRATION**

2

**THE INTEGRATION OF DATA
SYSTEMS**

3

**RESPONDING TO LOBBY AND
PRESSURE GROUPS**

4

**THE FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF
REVENUE**

5

**THE GIVE AND TAKE ASSOCIATED
WITH CHANGES TO VEHICLE
STANDARDS AND OTHER
REGULATIONS**

**AUSTROADS PROJECTS
ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL
ROAD TRANSPORT REGULATIONS**

1

**MANAGEMENT OF VEHICLE MASS
AND DIMENSION STANDARDS**

2

**MANAGEMENT OF VEHICLE
ROAD WORTHINESS STANDARDS**

3

**VEHICLE REGISTRATION
PROCESSES**

4

**MANAGEMENT OF DRIVING
STANDARDS**

5

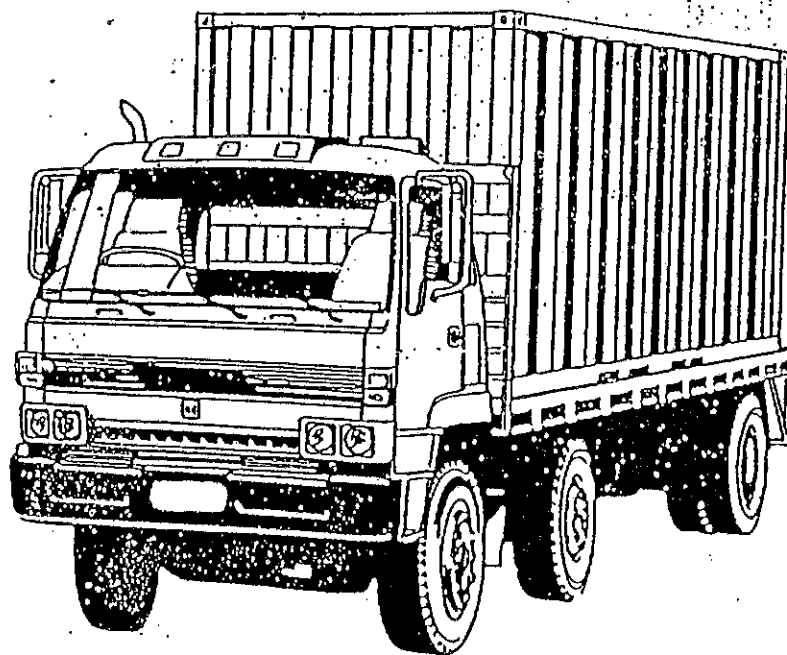
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PREVIOUS DIFFICULTIES

WEIGHT LIMITS PER SINGLE AXLE		
STATE	SINGLE TYRE	DUAL TYRE
A C T	NO LIMIT	NO LIMIT
N S W	5.4 TONS	8.5 TONS
Q L D	6.0 TONS	9.0 TONS
N T	5.4 TONS	9.0 TONS
S A	8.2 TONS	8.2 TONS
W A	5.4 TONS	8.5 TONS
T A S	6.0 TONS	9.0 TONS
V I C	6.0 TONS	9.0 TONS

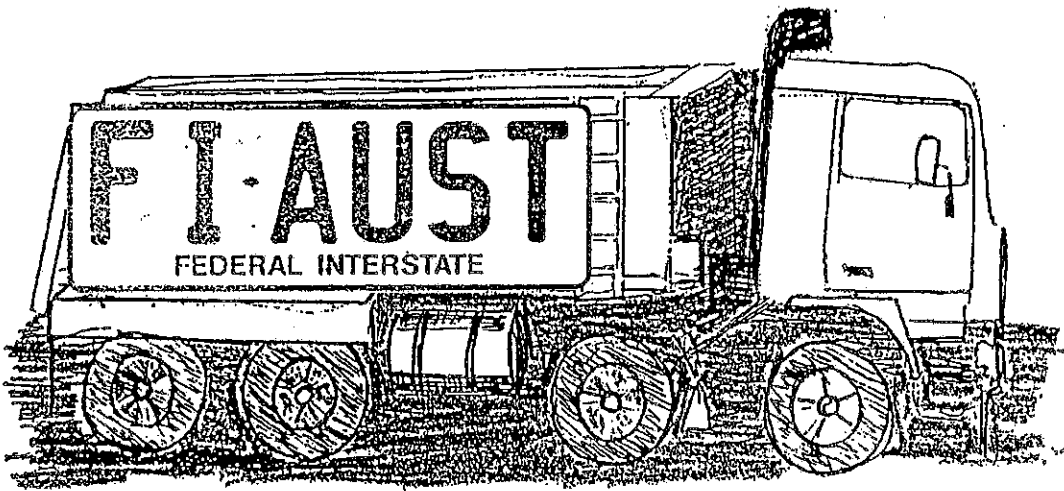
NATIONAL CODE OF PRACTICE

- COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS



**NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE
REGISTRATION**

THE PROGRESSION FROM 1985



**THE FUTURE HOLDS UNIFORMITY
FOR HEAVY VEHICLE
REGULATIONS**