

National approach needed to solve trucking's urgent economic crisis

Australia risks returning to the days of empty supermarket shelves unless National Cabinet shows leadership to address the nation's growing truck driver shortage.

NatRoad says there are more than 26,000 unfilled driver positions threatening the nation's supply chain and economic stability.

The situation is projected to get worse, with road freight projected to increase by 77 percent from 2020 to 2050¹.

According to the 2024 International Road Transport Union (IRU) Truck Driver Shortage Survey, almost half of Australian freight businesses (49%) are already facing severe or very severe difficulties filling driver positions.

The survey also found 38% of businesses expect the shortage to worsen in the next 12 months. Smaller businesses in particular are struggling with a lack of access to training programs and diversifying their workforce.

In response, NatRoad has proposed a National Road Freight Workforce Action Plan with eight key elements:

- 1) Create a national truck driver standard
- 2) Implement the national truck driver apprenticeship
- 3) Develop a National Heavy Vehicle Skills Hub
- 4) Introduce training incentives
- 5) Reform licencing and training
- 6) Deliver key actions in the ISA Workforce Plan
- 7) Recognise driver skill levels
- 8) Address other road freight industry skills shortages

NatRoad CEO, Warren Clark says the lack of truck drivers affects all Australians.

"Many Australians learned during COVID what happens when the supply chain is disrupted – empty shelves. The heavy vehicle industry really is the backbone of the nation's economy, providing essential services in transport, logistics, and supply chains across the country. If left unchecked, this driver shortage will disrupt every aspect of life, from grocery shop shelves to construction, industrial production and exports," Mr Clark said.

"It also should not be forgotten this goes beyond the dire economic crisis. This is also about safety for our truck drivers and all other road users.

¹ BITRE, 2022, [Australian aggregate freight forecasts – 2022 update](#).



“We need urgent coordinated action and leadership from National Cabinet because this crisis requires reform from multiple governments.

“We need all levels of government and industry to work together to resolve the current and future driver shortages and ensure that Australia’s road transport network remains safe, efficient, and sustainable.

“Together, we can secure the future of Australia’s road freight industry and ensure the continued delivery of essential goods and services,” Mr Clark concluded.

About NatRoad

NatRoad has a proud history dating back to 1948, NatRoad is the largest Australian road freight transport association, representing the interests of the \$66 billion industry and its members.

With more than 50,000 companies employing over 200,000 people across the country, the road freight transport industry is one of Australia’s biggest economic drivers.

A not-for-profit association, NatRoad is 100% funded through membership fees and business partnerships. No funding is provided by government or unions.

Media information – Kylie Johnson – 0431 413 459, media@natroad.com.au