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# Road spending for safety and productivity

Spending on better and safer roads plays a major role in improving heavy vehicle productivity and reducing road trauma

## A growing freight task

The land transport freight task will almost double between 2000 and 2020, with the greatest impact in urban areas; particularly around ports, intermodal terminals and distribution centres.

Freight is growing faster than the economy (more than 3.4% a year), but the number of heavy vehicles has increased by just 3.9% since 2000. Productivity reforms and road investment to allow bigger trucks on more roads have ensured fewer trucks are needed to do the work.

Initially used for long haul work, B-doubles are now operating widely around ports and metropolitan areas. Improved access has also been granted in many regional areas to grain silos, sale yards and farms.

As a result, the number of B-doubles has increased by 220% to 8,339 vehicles since 2000, but their average annual kilometres has decreased by 13%.

## Better roads improve productivity

An Australian Industry Group survey (*Transport & Logistics Operations in Australian Manufacturing 2006*) found that better road infrastructure plays an important role in reducing general transport costs.

The Centre for the Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) *Export Weakness, Investment Strength* also identified the removal of infrastructure bottlenecks as critical for Australia's export success.



Road upgrades can improve heavy vehicle access, relieve congestion, improve trip times and inflict less wear and tear on vehicles. For example, major upgrades to the Pacific Highway have saved 50 minutes in travel time and opened the route to B-doubles in 2002.

Bypasses around Albury/Wodonga and Craigieburn have similarly reduced operating costs for heavy vehicle users using the Hume Highway. The Albury bypass cut travel time for heavy vehicles by 15 minutes between Sydney and Melbourne.

In regional Queensland, the Barkly Highway was once dubbed the 'worst road in Australia'. Road and bridge upgrades have extended access for triple road trains and improved the reliability and efficiency of freight deliveries to Outback towns and the pastoral and minerals sector.

The \$331 million Deer Park Bypass in Victoria – a 9.3km of four lane freeway to improve access to the Western Highway, Western Ring Road and Melbourne ports – will carry 7,000 heavy vehicles a day.

The estimated benefit of the Deer Park Bypass to the trucking industry is \$98 million (over 30 years and in 2007 dollars). This is primarily due to travel time savings (90%), vehicle operating cost savings (9%) and fewer accidents (1%).

Change in fleet numbers	2nd Det. (2000)	2007 Det.	% change
Rigid trucks	258,779	249,951	-3.4%
Articulated trucks	46,565	48,097	3.3%
B-doubles	2,604	8,339	220.2%
Road trains	5,122	4,493	-12.3%
Other	8,900	13,453	51.2%
Buses	22,770	33,810	48.5%
Total	344,740	358,143	3.9%



Ensuring charges keep pace with the growing road-building program is also essential to support ongoing national productivity reforms; including the development of road networks for the 'next generation' of SMART trucks, quad axle group semi-trailers and B-doubles and, over time, B-triples.

## **Safer roads save lives**

Investment in better roads is essential to manage the growing freight task safely.

Approximately 330 people are killed each year in Australia in crashes involving heavy vehicles (one in five fatalities), with three times as many injured. This costs around \$2 billion annually.

The National Road Safety Strategy concludes that improving the safety of roads is the single most significant achievable factor in reducing road trauma.

Monash University's Accident Research Centre (MUARC) estimate that road spending on areas such as sealing, audible edge lines, passing lanes and rest areas can reduce heavy vehicle related deaths and injuries by 38%.

MUARC found that \$100 million spent on black spot programs will save at least 20 lives (including four related to heavy vehicle crashes). For each \$100 million spent on general road improvements at least 1.5 lives will be saved (including 0.3 lives related to heavy vehicle crashes).

By 2010 MUARC conclude the number of heavy vehicle fatalities prevented per year in Australia as a result of road improvements will total 91 (453 fatalities for all vehicles).