

Feedback on Heavy Vehicle National Law Policy Options  
(the Kanofski Report May 2023)  
made by Peter Goudie

Thank you for this opportunity to provide some comments on the Discussion Paper. I appreciate they are late, however, I did lodge a letter prior to the closing time to state I would be following up with these comments. However, my comments are not exhaustive as the Kanofski recommendations cover a vast area of road transport matters which I think some are fraught with a lot of danger.

My background is that I worked for the Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA) for 30 years. I remember when the NRTC was established and later changed to the NTC.

My major issue with the Kanofski recommendations lies around possible vehicle dimension & axle mass changes and the way permits might be issued. One of my roles as an Engineer was to manage the permit systems for over-dimensioned and over-mass vehicles and as such, I have a good understanding of how the system is administered.

Firstly, in regard to Mr Kanofski I searched a number of times to try to find something about his history and only found that he has held a number of senior administrative positions (including with the RTA) but there was nothing evident about any hands-on vehicle knowledge. This concerns me when suggestions are made to alter vehicle dimensions, mass and operating conditions. It appears to me that the Kanofski recommendations are made on the basis of productivity without considering whether such vehicles can safely drive on the road and can they interact safely with other roads users. Similarly, the Kanofski recommendations suggest productivity can be increased with longer driving hours but can the human body withstand it and the human sensory systems remain efficient. The heavy vehicle industry would be happy if there were no rules at all and this is why the industry is all for change if there is a relaxation of everything including enforcement and fines. In this regard, fines should not be an impediment when those in the industry make claim that they are complying but history shows that some are not, even the well-known name companies.

You also need to be aware that agreement by the road Authorities doesn't mean they understand what they are agreeing to. They might be completely oblivious to the subject they are voting on. For example, I am the author of the Second Edition of the Load Restraint Guide (I was seconded to the NTC to write it). The Second Edition is the version full of photos some of which are load related accident photos. My name is shown in the last dot point on page four. The Performance Standards (of which everything relates to) in the NTC third edition were changed and, in fact, they are wrong. Nobody except one other person picked up the error; so, we now have a set of performance standards pre & post third edition with some vehicles and load systems being designed to different standards. That version would have gone through an exhaustive approval process with public consultation and by all the States & Territories and Ministers but no one (except another person & me) picked up the error. I would suggest for this to happen, possibly no one actually read the

draft document properly. This leads me to wonder if all those persons consulted by Kanofski might have done the same with the Kanofski report. You should keep this in the back of your mind when considering the Kanofski proposals.

Secondly, I am concerned at the unqualified suggestion to just increase vehicle length from 19m to 20m. The Kanofski report should have included evidence on swept path effects and vehicle stability.

If you set aside any recent NSW road building projects, the NSW road system is designed for a 16.8m semi-trailer and when B-doubles came into existence, a B-double length of 21m. Many of the roads have only a 2.7m lane width including the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Pacific Highway. Current 19m vehicles are unable to stay within the lane markings and have to encroach into the adjacent lanes causing other vehicles to take evasive action. This happens all of the time. It will be worse with 20m vehicles.

Furthermore, recently there was consideration to increase the vehicle width to 2.6metres. However, it would appear that vehicle manufacturers will retain their 2.5m track width. This will reduce roll stability and increasing length might do the same. In addition, Kanofski is suggesting to allow all vehicles to go to 4.6m high. This must be a recipe for disaster for such oversize vehicles trying to navigate the old NSW road system (and in cities) at speed plus you must consider the danger it puts other nearby road users in.

As an aside, you should be aware that the National Transport Commission has already made two comprehensive investigations into 2.6m vehicle width which included swept path analysis of the road systems. Both these reports were rejected for various reasons but the rejection included that our road systems were not suitable for 2.6m vehicles on the basis of swept path encroachments.

Another point about increasing length to 20m, this most likely will lead to industry wanting a further relaxation to 20.2m. They will want an extra 1.2m to fit another row of pallets as pallets are 1.2m square. I would have thought this would have been mentioned in the Kanofski report.

Thirdly, the report mentions an automated access approval system. I mentioned above that I used to manage the NSW permit approval system. A lot of it required the staff to be aware of daily conditions such as the local weather, road condition, bridge condition, planned & unplanned maintenance and accident reports. Often, we would telephone forward to local staff as well as local Police & Councils before issuing an access permit. I would think that this would be difficult for an automated system to navigate.

Fourthly, when you take an overview of the Kanofski report a lot of it is about productivity. When we introduced road trains & B-doubles into NSW one of the great 'one-liners' the vehicle industry always put forward was that if you want to get cheaper Weetabix on your plate you will have to agree to the introduction of whatever policy or regulation change it wanted. Earlier this year, I participated in a vehicle industry forum and the same old Weetabix argument was raised again. I think the NTC should implement a Weetabix Index graph to plot how the industry

have kept down the price of Weetabix plotted against every regulatory relaxation. I think that the savings most likely go into someone else's pockets at the same time the safety of other road users is diminished.

In conclusion, the NTC papers raise seven reform areas with 18 options. From these it goes on to ask 25 related questions. I trust what I have said above goes some way in part, to answer all of those but I can't see how a person can answer some of the options & questions as there is no technical information provided to give an informed answer. For example, the options say let's go for 5% increase in mass; let's go to 4.6m high for general access, and, let's go for a length increase to 20m. How can anyone answer that without some technical information being provided to make a decision on. Vehicle mass determines the road user charges and axle mass is used for permit conditions. In addition, I said above that length and width changes have a bearing on vehicle stability and the ability to safely interact with other road users taking into account the fixed lane widths and the existing, old road system design.

Regards

Peter Goudie

### **Additional comments provided to the NTC by email on 14 December 2023**

Firstly, Kanofski discusses mass changes and also says that everyone should be allowed the CML as "there is no logic that says being in the accreditation scheme means the truck does less damage to the road". What is missing in that proposal is any reference that the vehicles must be designed to safely accept the additional mass particularly the axles. I can remember in past axle mass increases that some operators did not benefit because their vehicle's designed axle mass capacity was already 'maxed' out. In addition, as I remember some of manufacturers GVM limits are the related to the braking testing limits they set. Just making a regulatory change to a mass limit doesn't mean everyone can use them when their vehicle may be mass limited for other reasons. Kanofski has been silent on this issue.

Secondly, if you go back into the NTC archives you will find a report that made a study of the roll stability of the Australian vehicle fleet. It was unexpected that the results showed just about all of the fleet did not meet the lowest standard determined by the NTC. As I recall, cement trucks were the worst. I trust you can see my concern when the Kanofski report appears not to have considered stability at all; the effects on swept path; and, the safety of other road users in the vicinity of a heavy vehicle.

Regards.

Peter Goudie