23/11/2023

Submission re Work Diary Review

Thank you for allowing us to have this opportunity to have a review of the Work diary Rules.

In short I think they are complicated and difficult to understand. Truck drivers generally are great truck drivers, genuine essential service workers and dedicated to the job they do, they are often not academically skilled. I believe the fines imposed for errors are way too high and in part are driving skilled operators from our industry. I don’t think an error in calculating the hours at the end of the day is a safety issue and other trivial breaches should not attract severe penalties. I sometimes watch RBT and Highway Patrol on TV and I know they are sometimes not current shows but I sometimes see people, drug effected, unlicensed and driving unregistered and they seem to get a less fine than a driver who has made a genuine clerical error.

The vigour some inspectors use is also over the top. I have experienced myself where some officers go right back to the first page in a work diary looking for a trivial error. I can not see how a minor error or omission months ago can be a safety issue?

I think under the current arrangements the authorities are managing strict compliance and not fatigue and safety.

I think it would be fairer and easier to simplify the current system with something simple and get rid of the complications, for example, min 8hrs continuous rest in 24, max 5hrs driving in any 1 block, minimum 30min rest periods and drive max 6 days a week. Forget about the 15 min blocks etc count forward from an 8 hour rest period. Maybe the 8hrs could and potentially should include rest between midnight and 6 am to be part of the 8 hr rest so the circadian rhythm is not adversely affected.

Drivers need under some circumstances need to exceed these hours to get to a safe place with adequate facilities, for example if a driver was held up due to an accident or miles of 40kph roadworks or some other unforeseen and unplanned event, even long weekend traffic can cause significant delays.

One other point that seems wrong is the NHVR gets HALF the fines and penalties plus costs. Is that giving Dracular the key to the bloodbank ? If they were genuine about safety they would not have a financial incentive to find continual monetary breaches but a genuine incentive to educate and help. In spite of their rhetoric this in my experience does not happen.

I can not see any reason that inspectors need to go back more than 14 days in checking.

There also needs to be a mechanism that enables a driver to correct a fault whether they find it or the compliance officer at the company finds an error. At the moment this is not the case and drivers need to destroy that work diary and pay for another to protect themselves for potential hefty fines.

20 mt rule for vehicle lengths is long overdue and shouldn’t need PBS. Maybe some simple swept path computation. Our industry would benefit as currently we often need to remove components such as spare wheels and bumpers etc to fit within the 19mts, 20 mts would reduce or eliminate the risk involved in this practice.

Load restraint Code of practice:

I would like to comment that it does not have any mention of RV vehicles, boats and carvans in particular. We specialise in RV transport and are horrified by some of the load restraint practices we see. I would be more than happy to participate in any review or addition to this document.

On the subject of additional Mass CML or what ever scheme I can’t help but wonder why restrictions are not is place or privileges withdrawn when there are severe weather events. Roads like the black soil based roads such as the Newell between Narrabri and Goondiwind are destroyed after heavy soaking rain. Would reducing the weights and number of trailers limit the damage to public assets ?