NTC review

Hi, my name is Kate. I live in regional NSW and drive MC trucks. Including up to 4 trips to Sydney a week.

I am only newly licenced (5yrs ago) and have a set run, so the following comments refer to me and the way I work my schedule. I have a clean record and hope to keep it that way. I hear a lot from other drivers, from which I base my comments, on the assumption if my run changes this will affect me personally.

Firstly, I believe work diary penalties are too high. For a small beach this may take as much money as I earn each week. Often when we are filling out logbooks we are leaning across the steering wheel, relying on the interior lights of the cab for light. We sometimes have just awoken from a break and/or starting a break. Small errors can be made while doing so, even miscalculating times as we cross NSW/QLD border when the phone, smartwatch and tablets may change time, however the illuminated analogue dash clock or a traditional wristwatch worn in the truck doesn’t change. We need to remember to use the one method of recording time so these errors don’t happen. There is so much pressure to get it right or we lose money and receive an infringement.

When inspectors go through our books, a small mistake made 3 months ago is not going to contribute to our safety on the road today. Therefore I propose when doing inspections back through the book or even the previous book (if new one held <28days) only daily totals be looked at, rather than penalizing us if we were 5min short of recording a break (often due to parking bay issues, see further below). I am happy with more inspections, that will only go back the past 7 days in a logbook. Any further back than that, is merely a money making exercise.

Secondly, the 6 by 2 rule. Referred to as a split rest break, instructions are on page 34 of the front of the work diary. It does NOT stipulate whether the 6 hour break, or the two hour break, has to be taken first. Please can we have some clarification on this.

Does it matter if the two hour, or the six hour, rest occurs first? There is all sorts of confusion about this on the road. Example can be I having a (two hour) break, at midday, when my body is not normally used to sleeping. Or we get moved on by police or parking inspectors, or we get a load of cattle park beside us making lots of noise. So we make a move to a quieter bay then resume our break for the required 6 hours.

Thirdly, night hours. We lose 1.5 hours of work time for each 1 hour of night we work. This is unfair as we lose workable hours in a week, and therefore losing my ability to earn more money because the logbook has deemed my work through the week sufficient. We definitely don’t get 1.5x our kilometre rate for night work! I may lose my night hours say on a Thursday night and not have enough time to get home to the family through the week. I may not always be driving at night however delays at warehouses loading etc put me on the road later, and this was not planned for when I leave home on a Sunday. Nobody wants to be stuck away from home at end of the week because an unnecessary night penalty consumes my workable hours. It is only truck drivers that suffer this penalty whilst at work. We realise our job is risky etc, but you don’t see surgeons or doctors becoming penalised for working double shifts, and they have people’s lives in their hands as well. Us truckies are trained in BFM for managing our fatigue etc and our logbooks enforce sufficient rest so I propose abolishing the night hours concept in order to maintain efficiency for us trained and experienced in working at night. In addition, if you do a considerable amount of night driving, would it please be possible to include a box/section in the work diary to record our night hours in? This will allow us to keep track through the week and reach out to our bosses if we believe we are getting close to our limit, rather than getting caught short on a Thursday or Friday night.

Next I want to discuss the Kankool checking station, near Willow Tree in Northern NSW. I am regularly passing through this area and all trucks are instructed to proceed over the weighbridge when open. This is in a 100klm/hr zone which becomes 70klm/hr zone when it is open. Cars don’t obey these temporary speed limits. Sometimes if a truck who is on the weighbridge gets questioned or there is some delay, trucks cannot flow through the site and we sit out on the highway in the turning lane for up to 10 minutes. This is a very small weigh station, there is one truck on the bridge and only room for one other behind it. Then two waiting bays after the weighbridge. I’ve sat out on the busy New England highway for up to 10 minutes, with a petrol tanker behind me, and livestock truck in front of me with cars speeding past us. This feels very unsafe. If there isn’t room to wait off the road they should put up the closed sign until the congestion disappears.

Lastly, the page in the front of the work diary where we record where our paper records are kept, pages 32 and 33.

Please can you make a bit more room to write the full addresses. Instead of two columns side by side can you please merge the tables so there is room to fit all of the writing in? Not sure if it needs to spread over two pages either (my base and records base don’t ever change so I only ever use one line only).

I hope my feedback will be of some use to those who have a difficult job of reviewing this. Please contact me anytime for any further details?

Kind regards, Kate Austin, Armidale NSW 2350, austin\_katie@hotmail.com