

Report reveals overworked truck drivers fear raising safety concerns

February 3 2017

A Macquarie University report has revealed the major reasons why truck driving is Australia's deadliest job. Long hours, pressure to drive unsafe schedules with unsafe loads and an inability to raise safety concerns without jeopardising their jobs are among the risks to safety facing drivers.

The [report](#) criticises a lack of training and a "critical gap" since the Government abolished the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal "that can eliminate existing incentives for overly tight scheduling, unpaid work, and rates that effectively are below cost recovery".

The report was launched today at a Safety Summit organised by the Transport Workers' Union bringing together [truck drivers](#), industry, academics and politicians to devise a plan to deal with the crisis in trucking.

Associate Professor Louise Thornthwaite from Macquarie University said: "The research highlights a complex mix of regulation. It points to the importance of increasing enforcement and sanctions, particularly to ensure [safety](#) for those at the bottom of the [supply chain](#) including employees, owner [drivers](#) and others. This study highlights a "blame the victim" culture, and calls for those at the top of the chain of responsibility to be held accountable for safety."

A survey of truck drivers, which forms part of the report shows:

- Over 80 percent of truck drivers work more than 50 hours a week; 10 percent work over 80 hours
- One in six drivers who own their own trucks do not believe they can refuse an unsafe load
- Almost one in five owner drivers said they would not report being pressured to falsify a work diary. Of this 42 percent said the reason for not reporting would be fear of losing their job

"This report showcases a supply chain which puts all the pressure on drivers at the bottom and none of the accountability on the top, the wealthy retailers and manufacturers. It shows how this supply chain pits transport operators, which prioritise safety and employ experienced, trained drivers, against operators which cut corners and force drivers to take risks," said TWU National Secretary Tony Sheldon.

Dr Sharron O'Neill of UNSW, co-author of the report, said: "This research shows there are safe and unsafe workplaces in the transport industry and highlights how and why they coexist. The study takes a big picture look at the complex web of risk factors driving the unacceptably high rate of fatality and injury to road transport workers. It also highlights the very different degrees to which drivers experience safety at work."

Truck driver Frank Black said rates and payment times have slipped since the Government abolished the tribunal last April, making the job even more dangerous. "Things are going backwards and the pressure on drivers is growing. The Government can't be surprised at the high number of deaths and injuries on the roads," he said.

"Safe Work Australia showed that last year one out of every three workplace deaths involved a transport worker – now we know why. This report documents a supply chain which puts all the pressure on drivers at the bottom and none of the accountability on the top, the wealthy

retailers and manufacturers. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has to take responsibility for contributing to this situation when he tore down the tribunal and turned his back on a solution to this crisis," said Sheldon.

Reports released by the Federal Government last April acknowledged the link between safety and the pay rates of drivers. One report also showed a system of safe rates, where drivers are paid minimum rates for all their work, would cut truck crashes by 28 percent.

In the 10 years to 2014 over 2,500 truck drivers and other road users died in truck crashes.

Provided by Macquarie University

Citation: Report reveals overworked truck drivers fear raising safety concerns (2017, February 3) retrieved 23 November 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-02-reveals-overworked-truck-drivers-safety.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.