

ROAD TRAFFIC (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL – 29 April 2009

Adjourned debate on second reading (resumed on motion).

(Continued from page 2471.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:00): I rise to support this bill. We have come a long way in how we manage our freight, especially our heavy vehicles, in this country. I was over in Western Australia for a few months in the mid to late 1980s, a couple of years in a row, just prior to seeding, I had a bit of spare time, so I went over and worked for a friend of mine. I talked to operators over there in the trucking industry, and they were saying how they could get to Melbourne from Perth in under 30 hours. That was actually a stipulation by the freight forwarding company that they could do Perth-Melbourne in 30 hours. I understood that they could do it in 28 hours, and that is non-stop. They used the tin for toilet purposes and they had their food on board. This is a single operator, one up.

We have progressed a long way. Chain of responsibility legislation has come through in the past few years, and I agreed with some of the clauses in that legislation. Many parts of it went over the top, I believe, especially in regard to grain marketing where you have to be able to calculate 250 kilos difference—that is the tolerance you have—from your load limits. When you are operating a vehicle, let's say a B-double, that could be over 60 tonnes and a few more tonnes than that if you are under mass management. It is very hard, especially at the start of the season, to calculate the volume of grain to weight ratio. This is being assisted by more farmers putting in their own weighbridges or weighing their loads as soon as they get to a highway, but this all comes at a cost and it all comes with management.

As I said, we need to manage our freight but we have to manage it well, and I think we have to be careful that we do not take reality out of the process. I acknowledge that practices like driving from Perth to Melbourne in 28 hours are absolutely ridiculous, and that is why this legislation, which provides for the Intelligent Access Program, is excellent. It will aid in the security of the vehicle and monitoring the vehicle where operators can monitor the loads as well as the truck, and it will let companies monitor the driver's compliance.

I think even operators have realised that, if they do not play by the rules, legislative change will come in and hit them hard. As I have indicated, it has been necessary over time. We have had speed limiters put in trucks and now, with the Intelligent Access Program, operators will be able to see where their vehicles are.

We must be careful in the longer term that we do not over-legislate our transport industries. As this country is so broad, we could bring it to a standstill very quickly if we do not progress with realistic legislation and make it hard for transport operators to operate. The biggest problem with operating transport fleets because of the distances in this country is managing the needs of the drivers and their families and partners at home. A lot of the time they are away for a week or longer and may get home, if they are fortunate, for one or two nights on a weekend. Obviously, that is very hard on the family. This program looks excellent. Essentially, it can monitor from the sky. It will improve the situation with our transport programs, and I believe it is a step in the right direction.