

Careers and training

Key statistics

Employment in the trucking industry ¹	246,100
Average age of truck drivers ²	43
Average hours worked per week ²	46.8
Percentage male ²	97.5
Indicative yearly earnings for a local delivery driver (3-axle rigid truck)	\$45,000
Indicative yearly earnings for an interstate driver (6-axle semi-trailer)	\$65,000

The trucking industry faces a shortage of skilled heavy vehicle drivers, due to the industry's ageing workforce, the increasing freight task and competition from other industries, such as mining. The ATA and its member associations are working to encourage more people to enter the industry in driving, operational and management roles.

How truck drivers are trained and licensed

Truck driver licensing is the responsibility of the state and territory governments, although Australia's transport ministers have agreed that the national heavy vehicle regulations should include consistent minimum standards for driver competency assessment and licensing.

The truck driver licensing system is based on a time served model, called the Graduated Licensing System. For example, a driver must hold a car licence for two years before applying for a heavy rigid licence, and must hold the rigid vehicle licence for another 12 months before applying for a heavy combination (semi-trailer) licence. The driver does not need to drive a heavy rigid truck during this 12 month waiting period.

People entering the industry can also undertake certificate or diploma qualifications at TAFE colleges or other registered training organisations.

These nationally recognised, competency based qualifications provide best-practice training, as well as additional competencies relevant to work in the industry, such as following

occupational health and safety procedures, fatigue management, and shifting materials safely.

Working with schools

ATA member associations are working with schools and state training bodies to encourage more young people to enter the industry and undertake certificate and diploma courses. For example:

- ♦ the Transport Forum of Western Australia brokers structured workplace learning and school based traineeships for up to 36 trainees each year. Many trainees take up full time positions in the industry once they leave school;
- ♦ in conjunction with the Victorian Transport Association, TDT Victoria runs a cadetship program for school leavers. The cadets finish their training with a Diploma in Logistics, while being employed full time in transport and logistics.

The ATA runs the Road Ahead safety and careers exhibition, which travels to schools and colleges across Australia. In 2009, the Road Ahead visited 90 schools and 13 shows and conferences. In all, 22,981 people visited the exhibition during the year.



¹ BITRE, *Australian Transport Statistics Yearbook 2009*, p12.

² Globe Workplace, *Workforce Challenges in Road Transport*, p9. Reported prepared for the TWU/TALC.

Retaining existing staff and recruiting mid-career workers

The trucking industry is also working to retain its existing staff for longer and recruit mid-career workers by emphasising safety, professionalism and appropriate medical standards so drivers remain well.

To support this approach, Australia's transport ministers have agreed to a national roll out of the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads' industry skills branch concept, which supports employers in developing and retaining skilled staff through Government/Industry partnerships.

The ATA's enhanced licensing standard proposal

The existing heavy vehicle driver licensing system is a barrier to both young and mid-career workers entering the industry.

Most job vacancies are for semitrailer or multi-combination drivers, but new entrants face a long waiting period before they can be licensed to drive those vehicles. Mid-career workers with family obligations

and mortgages simply cannot afford to sit out the waiting period.

The waiting periods do not contribute to safety. At present, there is no requirement for drivers to practice their skills before they book a test or start training to drive the next class of vehicles.

The ATA's proposal to create an enhanced licensing standard would address these issues. Under this plan, drivers would be able to advance more quickly through the graduated licensing system if they undertook enhanced competency based training and assessment, and then demonstrated a history of safe driving on the job in the relevant heavy vehicle licence class.

The existing graduated licensing system would continue to be available. The addition of the enhanced licensing standard, however, would enable the industry to attract, train and keep heavy vehicle drivers with enhanced skills.

The standard would and encourage more drivers to earn vocational qualifications aligned to driving operations, which would contribute to road safety and the professional standing of the industry.

Licence Category	Current Eligibility Criteria	Enhanced Licensing Standard Proposal – Eligibility Criteria
Heavy Rigid (HR)	Hold car licence for 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hold car licence for one year. ♦ Complete enhanced RTO training and assessment in driving rigid vehicles, carrying out vehicle inspections, and planning and navigating routes. ♦ Record on-the-job driving for a specified period once licensed.
Heavy Combination (HC)	Hold HR licence for 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hold HR licence for six months. ♦ Complete enhanced RTO training and assessment in driving semi-trailers, inspecting vehicles and trailers and planning and navigating routes. ♦ Record on-the-job driving for a specified period once licensed.
Multi-Combination (MC)	Hold HC licence for 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hold HC licence for six months. ♦ Complete enhanced RTO training and assessment in driving multi-combination vehicles, inspecting vehicles and trailers and planning and navigating routes. ♦ Record on-the-job driving for a specified period once licensed.