



2026 QTA Road Freight Industry Awards Award Winners — Full MC Citations

Royal International Convention Centre | Saturday 19 September 2026

Training & Skilling Excellence Award

Winner	Followmont Transport
Award sponsor(s)	Saltera Training and Teletrac Navman

Full winner citation

Followmont Transport is recognized for its Leadership Development Program, a purpose-built initiative designed to grow capable leaders from within the business.

As Followmont continued to expand, the business identified the need to develop leaders who could support its people, sustain its culture and deliver consistent outcomes for customers.

Rather than adopting an off-the-shelf leadership course, Followmont created a program tailored to its people, its values and the realities of the transport industry.

The program supports both emerging and existing leaders, building capability across leadership, business operations, safety, compliance, customer outcomes and the wider transport task.

Since its introduction, six cohorts involving 69 participants have completed or taken part in the program, representing more than 20 branches and a broad cross-section of the business.

With consistently strong feedback and improved confidence in communication, coaching, safety leadership, commercial awareness and decision-making, the program is strengthening Followmont's leadership pipeline and supporting succession planning for the future.

Followmont's Leadership Development Program is a clear example of meaningful investment in people — practical, values-led and designed for long-term impact.

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Industry Safety & Innovation Award

Winners

Joint winners: VE Group and South East Queensland Hauliers

Award sponsor(s)

Gallagher and Slattery Grays Auctions

Full winner citation

VE Group

VE Group's Illuminate to Eliminate initiative is a strong example of practical safety innovation.

Developed to address the risks of loading and unloading heavy machinery at night, often in remote locations with limited lighting, VE Group worked with Drake Trailers to engineer a safer solution for their team.

Together, they designed and created an integrated lighting system for VE Group's 2026 Drake 4x4 Deck Widener Float, with lighting positioned around key operational areas including the landing legs, access zones and gooseneck.

The result is a permanent safety improvement that gives operators better visibility, reduces glare, improves loading accuracy and removes the need to rely on handheld torches around heavy equipment.

What makes this initiative so effective is its practicality. It is a thoughtful engineering solution to a genuine safety challenge, built into the asset and designed to deliver benefits every time the float is used.

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South East Queensland Hauliers

South East Queensland Hauliers has a long history of pushing the boundaries of high-productivity freight.

This award recognises two major innovations delivered within 12 months: the Electric A-Double and Electric A-Triple, and the Super A-Double.

The Electric A-Triple is believed to be the largest electric road train of its kind in the world, while the Super A-Double, built for the export grain industry, can carry four fully loaded 20-foot containers in a single movement. Together, these innovations respond directly to some of the industry's biggest challenges — a growing freight task, driver shortages, rising costs and the need to reduce emissions.

Importantly, SEQH delivered this progress without government funding, proving that innovation can be both commercially practical and technically impressive.

With validated trials, daily commercial operation and learnings shared for the benefit of the wider sector, SEQH has again demonstrated genuine industry leadership.

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Young Achiever of the Year Award

Winner	Patrick Mahon — MJ Mahon Transport
Award sponsor(s)	VCV Australia and King Bars

Full winner citation

Patrick Mahon represents the next generation of leadership in Queensland's transport industry. His passion for transport began early, starting with a complete Toyota LandCruiser rebuild at just 13, where he developed practical mechanical skills, problem-solving ability and a strong work ethic.

Since joining MJ Mahon Transport, Patrick has progressed rapidly into the role of Fleet Maintenance Supervisor and has played a key role in modernising the company's maintenance operations.

One of his most significant achievements has been designing and implementing the MJ Mahon Asset Maintenance System, bringing together preventative maintenance, servicing, inspections, defect reporting, repairs and compliance in one integrated platform.

He also introduced a customer maintenance portal, giving clients real-time visibility of servicing, repairs and asset status.

Through this work, Patrick has improved fleet reliability, reduced downtime, strengthened compliance and helped support the growth of the business.

What stands out is not only Patrick's technical ability, but his maturity. Industry partners describe him as calm, professional, solutions-focused and well beyond his years.

Patrick has already demonstrated the qualities of a future industry leader — curiosity, integrity, initiative and a genuine commitment to improving the way things are done.

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Trucking Woman of the Year Award

Winner	Samantha Mackie — Barnes Auto Co
Award sponsor(s)	Team Super

Full winner citation

Samantha Mackie's story is one of leadership, resilience and deep industry connection.

Appointed Director of Barnes Auto Co at just 23, Samantha leads one of Australia's largest dedicated heavy towing providers — a business founded in Brisbane in 1900 and known for specialist heavy recovery, accident response and critical transport support.

Her leadership extends well beyond her own business. Samantha has served as Treasurer and former Vice President of the Queensland Trucking Association, bringing practical industry experience, financial rigour and strong governance to the Association.

She has been involved in transport committees, towing associations, industry events and community initiatives over many years, and is widely respected as someone who leads honestly and genuinely cares for the people around her.

Samantha is also a strong advocate for empowering others, particularly women in transport, and her visibility as a young female leader at board and business level is a powerful example of what is possible in our industry.

Her contribution to community is equally significant, with 15 years of involvement with Youth Insearch, moving from participant to mentor, facilitator and board director.

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Professional Driver of the Year Award

Winner	John & Matthew Olsson — MJ Mahon Transport
Award sponsor(s)	Trailer Sales and Cummins

Full winner citation

This is a unique and incredibly deserving recognition.

John and Matthew Olsson share the same Volvo FH780 prime mover and operate as one seamless team, delivering time-critical refrigerated and dry freight from the Martin Brower Distribution Centre to McDonald's restaurants throughout Central Queensland. They cover of 300,000km of the State each year.

For more than six years with MJ Mahon Transport, they have built an outstanding reputation for safety, reliability and customer service in a demanding regional operation.

Their performance is independently validated through Volvo Connect telematics, where they consistently rank among the highest-performing drivers in a fleet of more than 90 professional drivers — including a number one ranking in fuel efficiency.

But this award recognises far more than data.

John and Matthew have maintained an incident-free employment record, remained traffic-infringement free for more than a decade, and earned the complete trust of their employer, customers and colleagues.

They are also trusted mentors within MJ Mahon Transport's Buddy Learning System, helping new drivers build safe habits, customer service skills and the professional standards needed to succeed in the industry.

John and Matthew lead by example. They represent consistency, humility, professionalism and pride in the role of a professional driver.

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Industry Excellence Award

Winner	Brett Plummer — South East Queensland Hauliers
Award sponsor(s)	NTI and Transurban

Full winner citation

Since purchasing South East Queensland Hauliers in 1997, Brett has led the business into one of the largest full-service wharf logistics providers at the Port of Brisbane, expanding its operations across transport, warehousing, biosecurity, customs, log export packing and heavy haulage.

His impact extends well beyond SEQH. Brett co-developed the A-Double combination before 2010 — an innovation that helped halve the number of trucks required for the freight task and is now operating across Australia, with around 6,000 units on the road.

He has continued to drive high-productivity freight innovation through the single-axle A-Double, tri-axle dolly A-Double, electric A-Double and A-Triple, and most recently the Super A-Double.

What defines Brett's leadership is his hands-on approach. He works alongside his teams, understands the equipment and operational challenges firsthand, and is known for asking how things can be done more safely, efficiently and commercially.

He has also invested deeply in people — training drivers, creating pathways into the industry, supporting migrants through employment and sponsorship, and developing future leaders within the business.

Brett's influence has shaped equipment, operations, customers and people across the wider transport sector. Please join me in congratulating Brett Plummer.

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Special Recognition Award

Recognition	Award for Excellence in Industry Engagement and Collaboration Practices
Recipients	Cunninghams Gap Reconstruction Project — Mcllwain, ARUP and Transport and Main Roads

Description from MC notes

An outstanding collaboration that brought government, industry, designers and constructors together to embed real-world heavy vehicle experience into infrastructure planning and delivery.

The initiative translated frontline operational knowledge into practical design improvements, targeted driver education and measurable safety outcomes, creating a model for future freight infrastructure projects.

Cunninghams Gap Heavy Vehicle Safety Collaboration

The Cunninghams Gap Heavy Vehicle Safety Collaboration brought together the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland Trucking Association, Arup and Mcllwain Civil Engineering to improve heavy vehicle safety during the reconstruction of the Cunningham Highway through Cunninghams Gap.

The Cunningham Highway is a nationally significant freight route connecting South East Queensland with the Southern and Darling Downs and interstate freight networks. Heavy vehicles represent approximately 30 per cent of traffic through the Gap. Its steep gradients, constrained mountainous terrain and major reconstruction works created significant safety and operational challenges for freight operators.

Beginning in January 2023, QTA facilitated dedicated workshops with experienced operators and project representatives. Industry provided practical advice on traffic management, signage, communication timeframes, hold points, oversize overmass movements, holding bays and road design. This engagement extended beyond conventional consultation, with feedback translated into engineering, construction and traffic-management responses.

Key infrastructure improvements included:

- Reducing the final climbing grade approaching the crest from approximately 13 per cent to nine per cent.
- Modifying traffic islands to better accommodate heavy vehicle swept paths.
- Constructing a purpose-designed parking and holding bay for oversize overmass combinations.
- Revising merging-lane line marking to support safer movements by long and heavy combinations.

The partners also produced 19 practical heavy vehicle safety videos covering steep descents, braking, gear selection, engine temperature management, overtaking, emergency stopping, use of the safety arrester bed, diff locks and changing roadwork conditions. One video attracted more than 24,500 views through QTA’s YouTube channel, while another received approximately 7,860 views. Several transport businesses have since incorporated the resources into driver training.

The initiative demonstrates the value of recognising drivers and operators as subject-matter experts and connecting their frontline knowledge directly with project decision-making, engineering design and construction delivery. It provides a transferable model for other freight infrastructure projects: engage industry early, test

assumptions against real operating experience, communicate through trusted industry channels and ensure feedback results in practical changes.

The collaboration has created an enduring legacy through safer infrastructure, improved driver awareness and a stronger government–industry engagement model for future Queensland road projects. The recovery works are jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.