



Keeping SA Safe

**Heavy Vehicle Enforcement  
South Australia Police**

2007 Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference

**Ross Rhodes  
South Australia Police**

Economic growth is reliant upon safe and efficient road transport. South Australia is no different from the rest of Australia with a high reliance on road freight to carry most of its commodity, product and consumer needs.

Within SA there is approximately 100,000 km's of road network within a landmass of 984,377 square kilometres.

Transport accounts for approximately 4.5% of the State's employment and 5% of the State's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributing about \$2.9 billion in 2004/2005.<sup>i</sup> The road transport sector in SA currently employs approximately 30,000 people. In accord with national growth predictions, a doubling of the freight task is predicted within SA by 2020. About 80% of that task is predicted to be by road freight.

Vast distances and remote areas provide challenges for community policing, especially the rigors of traffic law enforcement. Many rural highways traverse arid areas with long distances between either roadhouses or towns.

In accordance with the South Australia Police Road Safety Strategy<sup>ii</sup> all uniform police officers share some responsibility for enforcement of traffic related legislation and regulations within SA. Police resources are allocated to geographic districts called Local Service Areas (LSA's). Local police commanders are responsible for the provision of all policing services including those contributing to crime reduction strategies and road safety. Police services delivered include criminal investigations, general policing and traffic enforcement. Local police have additional resources available to them corporately on a needs basis from specialist areas.

The SA fatality road toll for the last few years has remained fairly constant.<sup>iii</sup> In accord with the National Road Safety Strategy and in conjunction with other contributory initiatives, the SA Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans aim to reduce the impact of road trauma. The 5 year fatalities average 2002-2006 for SA was 141. SA seeks to achieve crash reduction targets in accordance with the National Road Safety Strategy. Improved road use behaviour by the

impact of legislation, education and enforcement is anticipated to contribute about 22% of that reduction.<sup>iv</sup>

Heavy vehicles are involved in about 15% of fatal road crashes that occur annually in SA. During 2004 in SA a survey revealed that 30% of the heavy transport drivers contacted exceeded 85 hours per week driving. Regulatory controls generally restrict this to a total of 72 hours per week.<sup>v</sup>

Additional resources are available to assist locally based police. Traffic Support Branch provides a central group of specialists who have a State-wide traffic policing responsibility. Personnel available include major crash investigators, training personnel, traffic intelligence officers, highway patrol officers, and a variety of other police resources. Two motor mechanics are employed to assist with vehicle examinations and deliver supportive evidence with regard to lack of compliance to standards.

Police use a variety of specialised instruments to assist in their enforcement endeavours. These include:

- Speed detection equipment (both static and mobile)
- Static Traffic Cameras
- Automated Number Plate Recognition Cameras (ANPR)
- Mechanical vehicle inspection tools
- Mobile data terminals (communications, command and control)
- Radio communications
- Radar detector detection equipment
- Engine management computer readers

On the 19 May 2006 South Australia Police released its Road Safety Strategy 2006-2010. This strategy incorporated the National and State reduction targets for fatal and serious injury crashes and articulated the police roles and actions with a particular focus on detection, deterrence and education.

- **Detection:**– All police are required to take action at every opportunity where traffic offences are detected to reinforce the message that there is a low tolerance of poor driving.
- **Deterrence:**– Deterrence potential is maximised by the use targeted operations and increased visibility, supplemented by the deployment of specialist traffic resources, effective breath and driver drug testing and incorporating the use of technologies to assist in detecting traffic offenders.
- **Education:**– Police continue to work with other stakeholders to identify and develop more effective road safety strategies and programmes contributing to road crash reduction; Develop, promote and implement a lower tolerance approach to road safety; Enhance media strategies to highlight the consequences of inappropriate road use; Promote responsible service of alcohol and support effective prevention and intervention programmes for alcohol and other drug use.

On road enforcement by either police or transport authorities is expensive to deliver and sustain. There has been considerable acceptance of responsibility for performance-based incentives that contribute to road safety within the road transport sector. This evolutionary move towards increased levels of voluntary compliance, adherence to codes of practice and heavy vehicle accreditation schemes is steadily progressing. Initiatives such as these combine principals of ownership and inducement that aim to provide a value added environment with the benefit of enhanced road safety, while offering capacity to maintain or improve access and productivity. Police and

transport agencies play an important role in providing independent audit and verification of compliance and adherence to codes, legislation and accreditation requirements.

The necessity for consistent, effective targeted enforcement has been discussed at many forums in Australia in recent years. The level playing field concept where the same level of compliance applies to all transport operators has been widely discussed amongst the road transport sector and road safety stakeholders.

There is a percentage of road transport sector drivers, operators and other participants who routinely flout adherence to road safety requirements thus gaining competitive advantage over those who strive to comply (at least to minimum regulatory requirements) often incurring considerable implementation costs to do so. The enforcement challenge is to focus and deliver appropriate police resources to target participants that demonstrate habitual non-compliance and poor road safety outcomes.

South Australia Police introduced a 'Heavy Vehicle Enforcement Liaison Group' which is chaired by police and includes Transport SA Safety Compliance Inspectors and Transport Safety Investigators, Workplace Services Inspectors and Heavy Vehicle Examiners/Accreditation/Permits Inspectors. This group meets every month to discuss heavy transport compliance and enforcement issues particularly relating to targeted enforcement.

Verification of compliance and persistence in targeting recidivist non-compliance is considered essential to maximise enforcement potential and road safety outcomes. Good intelligence to sustain interception of targets is also invaluable to maximise efficient enforcement resource deployment.

'Chain of Responsibility' legislation casts the scope of responsibility for on road safety performance beyond the driver and operator. This concept where others who through their actions or inactions are in a position to influence the

drivers safe conduct on a journey are held accountable, was introduced as law in SA in late 2006. Initially these principals apply to mass, dimension and loading offences. The revision of Fatigue Management requirements pertaining to the drivers of heavy vehicles within the scope of Chain of Responsibility legislation has a target date for implementation in SA by the last quarter of 2008.

A topical issue within SA has been impacts upon heavy transport drivers due to delays at Distribution Centres of major retail outlets negatively impacting upon on road behaviour operations impact of sustained queuing requirements at major distribution centres. Consultation with the SA Road Transport Association and other stakeholders resulted in a series of presentations and consultation with senior management teams from three major distribution centres during June – August 2007, seeking achievable solutions to improve vehicle and load turn-around that would deliver on road benefits to drivers. This consultative approach positively contributes towards achieving both short and longer term beneficial road safety outcomes.

Road safety and transport regulations, traffic laws and compliance measures are constantly changing. The challenge for enforcement, particularly police operational on road enforcement is to remain relevant. It is necessary for police to ensure that meaningful outcomes and performance indicators that contribute towards road crash and road trauma reduction are achieved. This is about sensible use of resources and better utilisation of planning strategies and intelligence.

SA Police traffic enforcement significantly focuses upon 'The Fatal Five' identified from SA road crash statistics as major contributors to both the number and severity of road crashes. These comprise:

- Speed
- Fatigue
- Seat Belts

- Drink driving (& drugs)
- Vulnerable road users (Pedestrians, motorcycle riders and cyclists)

South Australia Police have formed a Heavy Vehicles Enforcement Group to investigate issues that are determined to negatively impact upon road safety.

*“The enforcement response must be tailored, but this requires resources, skill and time. Enforcement can also be more focused by developing risk based enforcement strategies, for example by concentrating enforcement efforts on high risk firms.”<sup>vi</sup>*

The Group focuses upon the road freight transport sector and targets certain drivers and operators who have been assessed by intelligence analysis to provide higher road safety risk. The number of personnel allocated to this Group is dynamic and staffed according to identified task needs. This Group is supported by the permanent allocation of a Field Intelligence Officer from the Traffic Intelligence Section.

Data accessible to the TAC Group is collated from a wide variety of sources. These include industry contacts, informants, criminal history, traffic offence history, road crashes, traffic volumes, vehicle classifications, information on culture and practice, driver and operator preferences and route selection. Safe-T-Cam traffic camera journey information and checking station sightings can assist.

A management process has been developed which allocates responsibility and accountability. Operators and drivers determined to be high risk are identified by content provided within intelligence target packages produced by the Traffic Intelligence Section who have collated, analysed and formed assumptions from the available data.

Intelligence analysis about emerging patterns by individuals, groups or organisations is then provided to a management team at Traffic Support Branch who determine prioritisation of police resources.

A target package that has been authorised for action is then provided to the Heavy Vehicle Enforcement Group. The management team provide parameters to indicate timeframe, feedback requirements, resources and priority to the task. The Group investigators determine shifts, locations and tactics to locate and process targets. Enforcement actions result in a number of outcomes, including the grounding of drivers (for up to 24 hours) and the issuing of Infringement notices, court prosecutions, seizure and forfeiture of property, referral to drug diversion counselling and vehicles being defected (major/minor).

Issues:

- Identified significant non compliance to ADR 65 Speed Limiting provisions – tampering, bypass and devices
- Located illicit drugs – possession for sale
- Located illicit drugs – personal use
- Located additional regulation log books
- Located radar detectors
- Located weapons
- Located Cash
- Located 'Chop Chop' Illicit tobacco product
- Dangerous Goods (mixed DG cargo with food produce)
- Brakes of prime movers wound off
- Evidence of poor vehicle maintenance
- Seat belts removed
- Brake and cabin lights isolation switches
- Hinged registration number plates
- Tampering and removal of compliance plates
- Grinding off of trailer identifiers
- Lack of adherence to fatigue management regulations and guidelines



- Speeding
- Attempts at avoidance
- Prevalence of recidivist offenders

Police frequently conduct mechanical examinations (involving climbing in, around and under the vehicle) at the roadside interception in an attempt to locate any equipment modifications suspected to contribute in non-compliance to ADR 65 or examine for vehicle roadworthiness.

Many causal factors may contribute to the frequency and occurrence of the issues listed above routinely discovered by police. Those mentioned here are not exhaustive and are mentioned to evoke discussion.

- Profit motivation (how much is enough?)
- Fierce competition (low margins)
- Poor business acumen (know your costs)
- Perception of Risk (likelihood of being caught wrongdoing?)
- Risk Taker culture (a proportion of risk takers – law breakers)
- Workplace culture (reluctance to change?)
- Drug addiction (frequency of use, more you take – more you need)
- Communication (Knowledge of changing regulatory requirements)
- Driver standards (shortage of skilled drivers)

South Australia Police consider the Heavy Vehicle Enforcement Group approach demonstrates a relatively low cost strategy which provides best use of resources. This Group targets high-risk drivers and operators. South Australia Police work together with the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) and other enforcement agencies to pursue road crash reduction strategies targeting those within the transport chain who may negatively and routinely influence unsafe on road performance. It is imperative that those who are in a position to influence safe on road behaviour and operations by transport drivers be held accountable for deliberate inappropriate decisions and intentional disregard for road safety.

South Australia Police continue to work together with representatives of the road transport sector and our community, striving to contribute to road crash reduction and improve conformity to road laws to achieve a safer on road environment. The presentation delivered at the conference specific to heavy vehicle enforcement will include a sample selection of topical interceptions with illustration of the issues disclosed and the measures taken.

## REFERENCES

---

- <sup>i</sup> Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, Australian Transport Statistics 2005
- <sup>ii</sup> [http://www.sapolice.sa.gov.au/sapol/road\\_safety/road\\_safety\\_strategies.jsp](http://www.sapolice.sa.gov.au/sapol/road_safety/road_safety_strategies.jsp)
- <sup>iii</sup> Transport SA Road Crash Statistics  
[http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/road\\_use/roadcrash.asp](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/road_use/roadcrash.asp)
- <sup>iii</sup> Australian Transport Council - National Heavy Vehicle Safety Action Plan 2003-2007 Pg 8  
Strategic Objective 3 – More effective speed management
- <sup>iv</sup> South Australian Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 Pg 4
- <sup>v</sup> Dr Angela Baker et al; SA Truck Driver Fatigue Study - Centre for Sleep Research, University of South Australia, June 2004
- <sup>vi</sup> Arie FREIBERG, Professor of Criminology, The University of Melbourne, "Achieving Compliance Through Strategic Enforcement" Pg 14 For NTC Conference 7/8 March 2002.