

Solutions, Not Criticisms

The road transport industry continues to be the focus of media criticism and sensationalism. Now let's look at some positive recommendations ...

With the Y2K hopefully over and out (thankfully) and now the gear-up for the new taxation system, I expected things were going to return somewhat back to normality. Unfortunately, after watching a recent television program on January 3 this year (*A Current Affair*) – which depicted the road transport industry, drivers and managers as law-breakers – I was disappointed to say the least. Think what impact this has on the general public, not to mention future generations.

Unfortunately this type of sensationalism still exists – always aimed at the industries caught in the cross-fire. Transport seems to be one of those industries always caught in unfamiliar territory with no escape either way. Not all, though, is doom

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and gloom. Without the road transport industry almost all of the products and foods seen in our shops and supermarkets would not exist.

The road transport industry has experienced unfair sensationalism throughout the years and I was hopeful that we were adult enough to move on. Obviously, sometimes people's own agendas get caught in the way of real progress. While keenly listening to the *A Current Affair* program and the people interviewed – including the unions' perspective – I found that one thing, amid all the "discrimination", was an absolute lack of recommendations or, for that matter, solutions.

It seems to be very easy for some people to criticise the road transport industry. Not so apparent was finding possible and practicable solutions for the overall benefit of the industry.

If we continue to adopt the "you are

at fault" finger-pointing attitude, the road transport industry will not have a sustainable future. Instead of finger-pointing, wouldn't it be easier to ask, 'why does this happen?', 'what are the underlying problems?', 'why do these problems occur and how do we solve them?'

Let's take the log book as an example – no, it is not an effective tool for managing fatigue. So what are the underlying foundations which could assist?

What about starting with consumerism and customer expectations. And those businesses whose review performances are based on on-time delivery. Unrealistic time expectations, time slots, queuing for extensive amounts of time due to poor design, decreasing freight rates,

increasing diesel prices and lack of appropriate parking facilities and amenities? The list goes on and on.

It is important to start at the beginning and at the end of the transport chain and not always focus on the middle.

What some people fail to realise is the problems can often be the solution. However, the constant and consistent undermining of our efforts by making the transport industry look bleak really does demonstrate the need for effective solutions. So far we've failed to offer and communicate them.

It would be remiss of me not to point out that there are many people – including single, medium and large operators – who are implementing and doing some fantastic and positive things for the road transport industry and its drivers. This will have a flow-on effect in time. Things, for exam-

ple, like driver health and on-site safety programs, diet advice, fatigue training, customer relations training, quality, TruckSafe and other initiatives; including internet-based solutions for driver and family health and well being. I take my hat off to those people for trying to build the very foundations for a solid future. Remember, sometimes simplicity in design often has the best overall effect.

I personally believe the road transport industry has come an extremely long way and, yes, we do have some way to go.

Finally, if we do not effectively address the very real issues which effect our drivers and managers on a daily basis, as mentioned earlier, and move away from a finger-pointing environment, what real chance do we have in building that sustainable and, more importantly, solution-based transport environment?

My web site choices this month would have to be the Olympic Road Transport Association (ORTA). If you are like me and had no idea they existed, ORTA is the organisation responsible for transport planning in and around Sydney throughout the Olympic period. The address is www.orta.nsw.gov.au.

The other site, which I also recommend if you are into E-Commerce, is the National Office for the Information Economy, located at www.noie.gov.au – a series of workshops on E-Commerce in the road transport sector is available for viewing and downloading. If you are into E-Commerce in the transport industry, then this information might be in your best interest. All the best – until next month, stay safe.

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