



15 August 2014



Prepared by Mathew Munro

## ALRTA (IMMEDIATE PAST) PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

*Congratulations to Mr Grant Robins who was elected as the ALRTA's new National President at last week's AGM in Melbourne. Grant has been an excellent contributor with the LRTAWA and ALRTA for many years and I know he will have strong support from the National Council to continue the fight to improve the rural transport sector.*

*Seeing as how this will be my last update, I'd like to reflect upon the year that was.*

*As you probably already know, I have been pre-selected to contest the seat of Dalrymple in the upcoming Queensland State Election and so I did not seek re-election as ALRTA President at last week's AGM. The President's position is rewarding but also highly demanding. With a Queensland election on the horizon, it was time to hand over the reins to someone who can make a full commitment – and Grant is just the person.*

*This has been a 'transition' year for the ALRTA. Eighteen months ago we were totally reliant on HGH Consulting to resource our National Secretariat and 1 August marked our first day of direct control. We now have our own staff, our own office and our own equipment. We are also upgrading our business systems to be as efficient as possible and to take advantage of modern capabilities.*

*During the first few months after I became President we were well and truly focussed on the Federal Election. We published our platform "Getting Regional Australia Back on the Road" and went about meeting all sides to make ourselves known and press our issues. This has paid enormous dividends with the ALRTA maintaining our standing invitation to attend meetings of Transport Ministers after the change of government and the Coalition government investing heavily in rural and regional roads despite the tightest budget in years.*

*We faced our first major challenge early on with the Federal Government's proposal to mandate anti-lock braking on all trucks and trailers. After some heavy lifting by our National and State Secretariats we were able to secure important exemptions for dollies and heavy stock crates to reduce the impact of problems operating the technology in harsh off-road environments.*

*In February we saw the commencement of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. This was not without problems but it represents the culmination of 20 years of hard work in the trucking industry to get a uniform national law in place and single national regulator up and running. It might take a while to smooth things out but after all these years I know that we are on the right track.*

*While we were able to convince the NTC that trucks are being over-charged, Ministers were unwilling to reduce charges in the current budget environment. Instead we secured a commitment to implement the NTC's recommended methodology from 2016-17 - so while not as immediate as we would have liked, relief is still on the horizon.*

*In March the ALRTA held a whole-of-supply-chain workshop in Canberra to progress national ramp guidelines. The workshop followed a comprehensive survey of facilities and report commissioned by Safe Work Australia which found that there is no consistent guidance available. We have since formed a broad-based working party and are aiming to agree and publish guidance material this year.*

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*Another significant development was the establishment of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal and commencement of a binding Order on 1 May. We have repeatedly told the Tribunal and Government that mandatory written contracts and safe driving plans are unworkable in rural transport. The Tribunal didn't listen, but the Federal Government commissioned an independent review of the Tribunal which has now reported. An announcement is yet to be made, but the Government has made it abundantly clear that they agree with our view that the Tribunal is an unnecessary layer of red tape.*

*Industry has also had many other minor victories over the year. We have managed to preserve current AFM accreditations, alter the way that AFM approvals are made, amend the HVNL to reduce paperwork, reduce penalties for minor administrative offences, improve consistency in counting time rules, and gain agreement for new laws allowing up to one tonne mass transfer to a tri-axle.*

*In June our National Council agreed new priorities for the next 12 months and we are already off to a good start. The NHVR has announced a Livestock and Rural Transporters Fatigue Management Scheme which will allow fortnightly cycles and which, subject to approval by fatigue experts, may later include flexibility for long rural runs and other circumstances in which it is difficult to set or keep rigid schedules. We have also managed to extend the 160km radius log book exemption for rural carriers from NSW into QLD and national application is under active consideration by the regulator.*

*Finally, I want to thank the ALRTA National Council and Secretariat for their strong support over the past 12 months. I might have been the captain, but ALRTA is a 'team sport' and we only win matches by working together. In particular, I'd like to thank Andrew Higginson, Robert Cavanagh and Barney Hayes who are all moving on from their long-time positions. The ALRTA is able to take the next step to become fully independent because of the great shape that these crusaders have left us in. We farewell each as friends and colleagues and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.*

*Liz Schmidt*

## ALRTA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Following annual elections held at the ALRTA AGM on Thursday, 7 August 2014, the ALRTA Executive positions for 2014-15 are:

**President** – Grant Robbins (LRTAWA)

**Immediate Past President** – Liz Schmidt

**Vice President** – Kevin Keenan (LRTAV)

**Vice President** – Graeme Hoare (LBCA)

**Treasurer** – Ron Pattel (LRTAQ)

**Secretary** – John Beer (LRTAV)

**ATA Rep** – David Smith (LRTASA)

**TruckCare Chair** – Kevin Fechner (LRTAV)

## LRTAV CONFERENCE – LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

Last week I attended the LRTAV Conference in Ballarat, Victoria. It was great to catch up with members and sponsors and to hear about how the ALRTA can assist in improving rural transport. There was a real focus on remembering where the industry came from with many interesting and sometimes amusing photos on display from bygone years. Official proceedings were opened by ATA Chair Noelene Watson who recalled that Don Watson Transport was once a budding livestock carrier until their main customer asked for assistance to transport hanging meat - a successful refrigerated carrier was born!

The Conference was not just about the past however – attendees also had a good hard look at the future. For example, the panel session on advanced braking technologies considered the benefits and issues in moving towards mandatory EBS in coming years. Sam Kekovich gave us a good laugh thinking about how Australia's past has shaped our values, and how those values will help shape our future.

Overall a great event that has brought members together and helped raise vital funds to support the association. I think it was topped off by the Gerry Gee & LRTAV President John Beer duet....."Smile! Smile! Smile!"....I guess you had to be there. There's always next year!

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