

# ONLINE ARTICLE

<b>Title:</b>	"Trucking gets nod to join Tax Forum"
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Trucking groups and the country's largest transport and logistics operator have scored a seat at the upcoming Tax Forum, which will discuss potential road charging reforms and a congestion tax.

Treasurer Wayne Swan has released the invitation list for the summit, which will run over two days from October 4 to 5 in Canberra.

The Australian Trucking Association (ATA), the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association (ALRTA) and the Australian Logistics Council (ALC) have all been invited, along with Toll Chairman Ray Horsburgh.

ATA Chairman David Simon, who runs Simon National Carriers, will represent the association, with ALRTA Executive Director Philip Halton also attending.

The forum will involve 184 people, including Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Swan, representatives from state and territory governments, the bureaucracy, the union movement, academia, business and the community.

"There was a fantastic response from individuals, community groups, businesses and organisations applying to attend the Tax Forum, with around 500 expressions of interest received," Swan says.

A discussion paper on the Tax Forum released late last month asks: "Should Australia consider ways to more closely link road charging to the impact users have on the condition and upkeep of roads?"

As well as asking the public if congestion charging should be introduced, it calls for responses on ways governments could use taxes to make sure people take into account the environmental impact of their decisions.

The discussion paper says the fuel excise and registration fees do not provide incentives for trucking operators to choose routes and vehicle configurations that minimise road damage and flow-on costs.

“The current charging system also results in significant cross subsidies between different types of heavy vehicle operators,” it says.

The discussion paper draws on the work from former Treasury Secretary Ken Henry’s tax review, which recommended a congestion tax in cities and mass-distance-location charging for trucks.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard says she does not support a congestion tax, which is a state government issue, and Swan says media reports to the contrary are misleading.

While the NSW, Victorian and Queensland governments have ruled out imposing a congestion charge, the Tax Forum discussion paper has sought feedback from the public on what it thinks should be done to improve the traffic network.

The forum will also discuss the company tax rate, payroll tax, stamp duties and insurance taxes.

Halton says he looks forward to working with all governments and industry groups to develop better arrangements for investment in the road network to improve freight productivity.

He says he will also discuss high up-front registration fees and road user charging, which is currently being examined by the COAG Road Reform Plan.

The COAG Road Reform Plan has proposed a mass-distance-location charging model that will fit trucks with GPS and charge them based on their weight, the roads they use and distance they travel. The ATA wants a two-tier fuel-based model that separates heavy vehicles into two different classes.