

ONLINE ARTICLE

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LIVESTOCK trucks would be loaded with more cattle under regulations to go before cabinet, in one of several proposed changes to NSW heavy vehicle regulation.

The Roads Minister, Duncan Gay, has won the support of the livestock industry by proposing to increase the amount of livestock loaded on a B-double from 64.5 tonnes to 68 tonnes.

The move is one of several initiatives under way into road freight across rural and regional NSW.

But the trucking industry, under fire recently following crashes and police investigations, is pushing for still more reforms and greater access to Sydney motorways.

Mr Gay will soon present the livestock changes to cabinet, which will increase the number of beasts loaded onto a B-Double from about 60 to as high as 72, and if adopted they will bring NSW into line with those of the rest of the country.

Another proposal by Mr Gay is to allow trucking companies to use their own electronic monitoring systems rather than a government-run system that allows them access to some regional roads.

Currently, if truck operators sign up to what is known as the Intelligent Access Program, which monitors where and when they run, they are given access to extra routes through the state.

But Mr Gay's proposal would allow trucks to run on the routes without signing up to the program, if they could prove they had similar monitoring technology.

This idea was criticised by the opposition roads spokesman, Robert Furolo.

"The O'Farrell Government can hardly launch a crackdown on trucking companies tampering with speed limiters on one hand and then allow the same companies to take over monitoring of their own satellite tracking of heavy vehicles on the other," Mr Furolo said, referring to recent police action against rogue truck operators.

The government has also started two reviews into the roads on which different types of heavy vehicles should be allowed.

One review, the metropolitan road freight hierarchy, has been criticised by the industry for not addressing whether more B-doubles and B-triples should be permitted on major Sydney motorways.

The government has also issued draft guidelines to determine what routes restricted access vehicles should be allowed to run on through the rest of the state.

The executive director of the Livestock & Bulk Carriers Association, Emma Higginson, said increasing the load limit would also improve animal welfare, as animals would not be able to move about. "As soon as there's effluent involved in the truck they can slide around, this [the plan] gives them a nice loading pattern," she said.