

**AIR – SEA – RAIL – ROAD – STORAGE – FREIGHT**

Fact Sheet

Heavy Trucks – Safer than Cars?

Not many people like driving near large trucks. There is a community perception that they are unsafe, but there are several factors that might make you pause and think again about what kind of vehicle you would rather have driving next to you.

**80% of heavy truck – car accidents are caused by the car<sup>1</sup>.** This is fact – as recognised by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. There are many factors that contribute to this result, among them the far greater driving experience of most truck drivers over the average motorist.

Many **Heavy Vehicle drivers are psychometrically tested** – something not possible with the average road user. This makes logical sense – as a Transport Operator looking for someone to operate equipment worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars (as most heavy combinations are) you want to make sure that the people you place behind the wheel are suited for the job, and won't risk your investment. This desire to protect your investment also dictates that **the best drivers drive the biggest vehicles.**

**Experience Counts.** 30% of all drivers killed in South Australia are aged 16 to 24<sup>2</sup>. From gaining your "L" plates at age 16, it takes a minimum 6 years to get a "Multi-Combination" or "MC" licence, gradually working through the different licence classes. Even if a person does manage to gain their MC licence before they are 25 it makes little difference – except in extreme circumstances Insurance Companies are reticent to insure a person under 25 to drive multi-combination vehicles. This means that only seasoned drivers are driving these heavy combinations.

Truck drivers have a much **lower chance than car drivers of being affected by alcohol.** Testing of drivers involved in serious accidents has shown that only 2% of truck drivers are affected by alcohol, compared to around 30% of all drivers. Introduction of "Chain of Responsibility" laws and random drug testing in some states is expected to drive the number of truck involved serious accidents caused or exacerbated by alcohol and other substances even lower.

**Bigger trucks means less trucks** on the road – it will take less units to perform a given task. 2 B-Double combinations are the equivalent of 3 semi-

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<sup>1</sup> Monograph 8, Fatal Articulated Truck Crashes (ATSB)

<sup>2</sup> Road Crash Facts 2004, Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure

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trailers. A double road train equates to 2 semi trailers. A variety of other multi-combination vehicles are beginning to access the network and we will

see more in the future as Performance Based Standards (PBS) become easier to access.

The **number of fatal crashes** in Australia in which heavy trucks were involved has reduced **19% over the past 5 years<sup>3</sup>** - from 165 in 2000 to 135 in 2004. In contrast the all-vehicles number reduced 10% in this same time period. This is despite a large increase in truck numbers and total distance travelled.

So who would you rather have driving next to you?

**RAV (Restricted Access Vehicle) Recognition Guide**

(maximum length)



Semitrailer (19m)<sup>4</sup>



B-Double (23-25m)



Double Road Train (32-36.5m)



Triple Road Train (53.5m)

<sup>3</sup> Road Deaths Australia: 2004 Statistical Summary (ATSB)

<sup>4</sup> Note: Semitrailers are General Access Vehicles – they can legally travel on all roads without weight or height restrictions.