Regulatory and/or Licensing Bodies

- The Department of Transport and Main Roads WA are the entities responsible for licensing and regulatory requirements in the road transport industry.
- Australian Transport Ministers and the National Transport Commission (NTC) are working to establish national legislative and regulatory systems to support the commercial deployment and utilisation of autonomous vehicles nationally by 2020.[i]
- Although WA is not yet a signatory, possible amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law and the Heavy Vehicle (Fatigue Management) National Regulation may affect future skills and qualifications required.

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Existing and anticipated supply and demand for skills:

- The impact of adverse weather conditions (i.e. flooding, bushfires and drought) and COVID-19 is anticipated to have a long-term affect on industry. The full impact of this is yet to be determined and will need to be closely monitored. [ii] *Please refer to Industry Impacts from COVID-19 for further details.*
- Most employers continue to use a variety of means to advertise for positions. Typically Seek, word-of-mouth. Social media, including Facebook is used to tap into a younger cohort. In regional centres, advertising is done using billboards located in the industrial areas. Some larger companies are also offering referral-fees for any drivers (i.e. line haul drivers) hired through the referrals of current employees/clients or contractors. [iii]
- According to IBISWorld, the road transport freight industry is anticipated to face competition from rail freight transport industry as new networks are established. As previously reported, the number of trucks on metropolitan roads has declined slightly due to the increase of freight on rail, although this is not likely to impact the number of drivers required. This is due to a number of factors such as the freight task for mine and construction projects requiring continued demand for Truck Drivers as well as Schedulers and Managers.[iv]
- Industry revenue for Road Transport Freight is anticipated to rise at an annualised 2% over 2024-2025 to reach $51.6 billion nationally.[v]
- Fluctuations in global fuel prices have contributed to changes in industry. It is anticipated these costs will be passed on to consumers through surcharges for larger operators.[vi]
- In 2019 Machinery Operators and Drivers (Truck Drivers, Automobile Drivers, Bus and Coach Drivers, Couriers and Postal Deliverers) account for nearly half of all industry employment nationally within the Transport, Postal and Warehousing sectors. Although slowing, this has been driven primarily by strong growth which continues to be seen in 2020 within the Road Transport sector.[vii]
- There continues to be acute shortages of Truck Drivers in WA comprising a broad range of road transport businesses in the freight, furniture removal, dangerous goods, livestock and logging sectors.[viii]
- The impact of technological advancements and the implementation of innovative practices will continue to have an impact on the transport and logistics sector and required skills sets are likely to continue to evolve.[ix]
- Increasingly, Verification of Competency (VoC) measures are being utilized as part of company inductions to determine and verify the level of skills of new recruits. In some organisations, this also includes literacy tests for a basic-level of English, as well as drug and alcohol tests. Companies who are utilizing these measures are reporting one out of five candidates do not pass this initial stage, with an additional three out of five drivers resigning after six months due to the nature of the work. [x]
- The following skills continue to be in increasing demand within the transport and logistics industry and span across driving and non-driving roles: communication; problem solving; compliance; technology; Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN); data analysis; customer service.[xi] Software analysis skills are growing in demand as the nature of tasks Truck Drivers are preforming evolves with the implementation of new technology.[xii]
- The uptake of VET qualifications by industry remain low. Industry preference for licencing remains dominant so organisations can ensure drivers gain the relevant experience needed as opposed to staff attaining formal qualifications.[xiii]
- Industry continues to support the use of skill sets (micro-credentialing) as a faster means of equipping workers with the relevant skills as job roles change due to policy or technology/innovation developments.[xiv]

- Given the long lead time to obtain a Truck Driver's licence and relevant industry experience, industry has indicated it is still facing a shortage of experienced Truck Drivers and Schedulers.[xv] These occupations were recently put forward for the 2020 SPOL.[xvi]
- The Heavy Haulage Driving Operations Skill Set was developed following considerable industry consultation, including discussions with the LDSC; and will fill key skills gaps for this essential service and will give Drivers the end-to-end skills needed in their workplace. South Regional TAFE is working in partnership with Keens Truck Driver Training to deliver the new program. [xvii]
- Due to safety aspects related to the job, it is not practical for employers to hire learner drivers until they have obtained experience and competency. The introduction of the new Heavy Haulage skills set will assist job seekers to develop their competency and experience and become employable for industry. [xviii]
- The complexity of the Scheduler role continues to evolve covering many elements (i.e. compliance, team leadership, and rostering). This role continues to be critical to business operations, particularly for small to medium operators. [xix]
- Industry is further impacted by an ageing workforce, which is also limiting industry's ability to implement succession planning, particularly for smaller operations who do not have the same level of flexibility as larger companies.[xx]
- Additional checks and balances are needed outside the usual training category and should include: security checks, mental health, drug and alcohol/fitness for work assessments, and compliance requirements. If left unaddressed this issue will further deplete the available pool from which employers can recruit.[xxi]
- A nationally recognised course in automation was made available in 2018 at WA's TAFE colleges and high schools. This has the potential to bring in workers transitioning from other sectors.[xxii] South Metropolitan TAFE, in Partnership with Rio Tinto is planning to expand the intake for its automation program to regional WA to increase the availability of future focused skills. [xxiii]
- A draft review of the truck driver licensing framework was undertaken in May 2018. The review highlighted the current system is inadequate in meeting safety risks requirements. There will be another round of consultancies to further investigate challenges with driver training to be released in 2020. [xxiv]

Regional Concerns

- Regional recruitment for Truck Drivers continues to be an issue. Particularly, as regional towns do not offer the same level of infrastructure as can be accessed in Metropolitan areas (i.e. quality of schooling and housing, and cost of moving). This can be a deterrent for workers to relocate regionally. As with other industries, there is a preference to for employers to hire a local workforce, however the traditional pool of applicants (i.e. farmers) is no longer a recruitment source. [xxv]
- In regional areas, most training is done in house using non-accredited pathways. Whilst experienced Truck Drivers are preferred, industry is prepared to develop individuals for specialty roles such as livestock.[xxvi]
- Due to the inability to recruit locally, some companies are introducing FIFO roles for MC Drivers in regional areas (i.e. Kalgoorlie) to meet demand. Where possible, these companies are able to offer variability in roster arrangements to appeal to the workforce or come up with other temporary strategies to meet demand. For instance, redeploying drivers from other projects to meet demands/contract requirements for new projects. [xxvii]
- Regional projects about to enter construction in the mining sectors have started to impact the demand for Truck Drivers. This is especially true in the Pilbara where the bulk of the activity is occurring.[xxviii]
- Within the logging sector there is a limited pool of available Truck Drivers of specialised vehicles. This is due to several factors such as technological advancements, low financial incentives for relocation, ageing workforce and employment in other sectors such as farming.[xxix]
- Some organisations are lowering the minimum experience required for roles to better attract workers and to overcome recruitment and attraction issues.[xxx]
- In metropolitan areas the demand for Fuel Tankers had lessened as a result of travel restrictions. However this was not the case regionally as the regions needed to maintain current supply and demand levels to assist semi-industrial and agricultural industries. [xxxi]
- Industry is continuing to experience challenges in accessing training within the Northwest regions. This issue is further compounded for those industries experiencing ongoing skills shortages.[xxxii]
- Regionally, there is still a high demand for HR and MC drivers. The skills shortage for competent Truck Drivers and transport operators continues to be a concern for businesses, particularly in the Northwest.[xxxiii]

INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

Strategic directions, policies and priorities for industry

- Some organisations are implementing policies and procedures to tackle issues surrounding disclosed and non-disclosed Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) challenges in the workforce. The policies and procedures identify barriers which may impact workers ability to undertake their roles, and the appropriate steps which need to be taken to ensure workers have an appropriate level of understanding before completing tasks.[xxxiv]
- Industry has identified career progression pathways as an entry point to engage younger cohorts (i.e. delivery drivers). The Certificate II in Terminal Operations is an alternative approach to non-licensed pathways to the road transport sector and industry is investigating how best to utilise this approach. [xxxv]
- The LDSC continues to meet extensively with key stakeholders within government, and the road transport industry to discuss recommendations that include how to properly address issues around Heavy Vehicle Licencing, regulatory requirements and career entry pathways into the industry.[xxxvi]

Industry Impacts From COVID-19

Initial Impact

- As the impact of COVID-19 is fully realised it is anticipated that demand conditions will change and revenue for this industry is expected to decline nationally by 8.4% in 2020 (as total exports and exports contract).[xxxvii]
- All State and Territory governments worked together, along with industry and regulators such as the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, to ensure that any unnecessary barriers to freight movement were minimised during the height of the first wave of COVID-19 ensuring the continued need for these workers.[xxxviii]
- Australian, state and territory governments reaffirmed the critical role of the freight sector in providing essential supplies of food, medicine and goods. New freight border protocols came into effect 24 July 2020 to minimize the risk of community transmission from travel through any Australian “hotspots”, applying to any heavy vehicle over 4.5 GVM. For WA there continues to be a requirement that anyone who has transited through Victoria or NSW that they take a COVID-19 test within 48 hours of arrival into WA and must wear a face mask. If they enter and leave within a 48 hour period essential workers do not have to be tested.[xxxix]
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and the National Cabinet approved an exemption for roadhouses, dedicated truck stop facilities and Truck Driver lounges to remain open during the height of the restrictions so Heavy Vehicle Drivers continued access to showers, restrooms and facilities to undertake their mandated fatigue management breaks (provided hygiene and social distancing measures are maintained). [xl]
- The Federal Government announced two stimulus packages to assist Truck Driving Companies including owner-driver businesses nationally. According to the Australian Trucking Association (ATA) there are 28,900 owner-drivers in Australia, who make up 54 per cent of the trucking industry who have a crucial role in our supply chains. [xli]
- Trucking businesses in the grocery and fuel supply chains continued to be in high demand throughout the pandemic, however other businesses such as small to medium operators experienced reduced or no work. Operators who provided freight services to downstream customers affected by restrictions (e.g. retailers) experienced a downturn in demand during the early stages of COVID-19. However, the increased demand for home delivery saw a redeployment of these drivers to those other areas. [xlii]
- No changes were reported in the demand for the transportation of livestock, fertiliser and lime. These sectors have not reported any impact on workforce numbers. [xliii] Although international livestock exports will stop until September 2020 there is no foreseeable changes to workforce capacity at this time. [xliv]
- For some companies their niche markets were heavily affected thus reducing some of their freight demands. For instance, in the Titanium market almost 90% of contract/production work was shelved due to travel restrictions and market changes affecting the aviation industry (i.e. the construction of new planes has since been halted). In addition, the forestry sector has also been affected in terms of lower market consumption and ability to export products to South East Asia (i.e. paper and wood products). [xlv]
- Future activity in the freight sector is still somewhat uncertain until other sectors resume pre COVID-19 activity and fully re-enter the workplace. [xlvi] Once activity resumes demand for their services may grow at a rapid pace, requiring immediate access to workers to fill increased and rapid demand.
- Although initially there was a decline in truck sales, these figures have now rebounded compared to April 2020 and May 2020. Keeping in mind that June 2020 figures are usually strong, this may be an early sign of recovery for the road freight sector.[xlviii]

- Although impacts from COVID-19 are yet to be fully realised, the national freight task is expected to increase as Australia enters the recovery phase. Increases in construction projects as well as the expanding population, increase in infrastructure projects and the growth of online shopping in WA is predicted to create a "dramatic" increase and will contribute to growing the national freight task. Resulting in a continuing and growing need for more trucks, freight trains and other vehicles to operate more hours, across more days.[xlix]
- Increases in online delivery and household goods will continue to put logistical pressure on retailers' delivery networks, nationally. [l]
- There is early evidence of a pick-up in the economic activity in China which remains a critical export market for Australia. In addition, trade agreements with other key growth markets (i.e. Japan, South Korea and Indonesia) will likely stimulate employment growth in key export sectors within the supply chain for the freight and logistics sector. [li]
- During COVID-19 many companies rolled out new technological advancements and adapted business models (i.e. targeting new niche markets or implementing new compliance and safety requirements) more rapidly than initially planned in order to keep up with demand and to remain relevant, viable and operational within COVID-19 restrictions.[lii] It is anticipated this may foster long term changes to business models and practices for some companies in order to shield them from the effects of another pandemic, requiring the rapid upskilling for existing and future workers. [liii]
- Affecting all industries, a series of temporary Award and leave benefits were announced offering unpaid pandemic leave and offering annual leave flexibility to employees affected by COVID-19 This assisted employers to maintain staff levels for jobs that were under hiatus or seeing reduced trade. The new measures ended on 30 June 2020. [liv]
- A number of transport companies are using two-up driving and exchanging drivers at State borders to improve working conditions and safety for drivers. [lv]
- For some regional freight companies, the downturn in work across the Oil & Gas sector, aviation services and tourism has led to the reduction in demand for freight to be transported within regional communities. This negatively impacted the number of workers required to transport freight to/within those towns.[lvi]
- In some road transport areas, workers were temporarily stood down, or had hours of work reduced; whilst in others, hours dramatically increased as a result of panic buying and other factors. [lvii] It was anticipated it would take three to six months to train individuals to a competent level to replace any workers lost. [lviii]
- In some regional centres, smaller companies of five employees or less had to stand down between one to five of their employees. Within Broome 70% of businesses have had to do this (across all industry sectors).
- The majority of Truck Drivers stood down in the Northwest were FIFO. Regional centres share concerns that competent FIFO Truck Drivers who have been retrenched may be lured away to other industries and not return.[lix]
- Some senior management roles (based in metropolitan areas) were FIFO from the East Coast for some transport operators. Where possible workers in these roles were relocated temporarily to WA to overcome challenges associated with quarantine measures. In other instances, operators have provided temporary accommodation and/or adapted rostering to meet quarantine requirements. For some companies this has created a need to ensure mental health for workers separated for longer periods from families were also addressed. Some mining sites restricted FIFO workers from entering due to their own internal policies, however these workers were redeployed to other sites with no longer-lasting effects. [lx]
- In many instances companies are trying to employ displaced workers from other industries to keep up with the high demand for their products and services. As well as availability, these workers possessed requisite skills to be readily transferred to entirely different sectors/new industries. For instance, Linfox created an additional 700 new job roles and opportunities nationally to cope with the COVID-19 response, with some of their new workers being drawn from a liquor supply logistics company which had to radically downsize their staff. [lxi]
- During the initial stages, some mining companies recruited additional workers, including Truck Drivers to ensure they had a reserve workforce readily available, which created further demand for experienced and qualified Drivers. [lxii]
- The high demand for Truck Drivers caused by surges in online shopping and panic buying, has been further exacerbated by existing labour shortages being felt across industry for skilled, experienced and qualified heavy vehicle drivers. With changes to air freight, more cargo (particularly freight for mining and resources companies) is now being shipped via road freight, increasing the freight task. [lxiii]
- In many instances additional compliance and safety duties were absorbed by existing staff, particularly for smaller operators. In addition, Managers with MC/HC licences were redeployed to more active roles to address a temporary in-balance in staff numbers created during peaks and troughs of COVID-19. [lxiv]

- There continues to be an ageing workforce issue for Truck Drivers and there are difficulties in attracting younger cohorts to these roles, placing additional pressure on the trucking industry in sourcing and retaining skilled and experienced drivers to provide essential services. [lxv]
- Heavy Vehicle Drivers were identified by Western Roads Federation (WRF) to be high risk for COVID-19 due to an ageing workforce, and a high number of workers who have pre-existing medical conditions. Additional steps to conduct COVID-19 training for the protection of Drivers was implemented and Infection Control policies and procedures were adopted and implemented across all areas by industry. [lxvi]
- During the initial stages of COVID-19 there were announced changes to the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme medical and face-to-face audit requirements to ensure Drivers and operators were able to continue meeting demand[lxvii].
- The Truck Driver occupation was initially expected to experience strong growth over the next 5 years and is listed as one of the top 10 occupations expected to create the greatest number of jobs.[lxviii] Seek Employment Trends showed that road transport roles were up by 21% year-on-year. This reflects growth in demand across industry. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on industry it is likely these figures will remain high as the Truck Driver Occupation is still identified as one of the top occupations in demand.[lxix]
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing national employment was initially projected to grow at 4.3% annually for the period 2019-2023; given the impact of COVID-19 on the sector these estimates are now unclear. [lxx]

Mobile Crane Operators

- Within the Gascoyne area, one company has been able to keep highly skilled drivers such as Mobile Crane Operators employed by redeploying them to less skilled roles to maintain their hours. Where possible, companies are trying to maintain higher award rates for these roles to maintain these skilled people. [lxxi]
- Industry has raised concerns over the recent amendments to regulatory requirements for mobile crane licence holders. The C1 high risk qualification changes require a minimum of 2 years' experience to be held by the applicant to undertake training. This means existing staff are unable to meet the experience requirements. In addition, this presents a significant bottleneck for companies that wish to upskill their workers due to no use or access to C6 cranes needed to attain this. This will impact their ability to continue performing duties moving forward as activity begins to pick up pace. Without an ample transition period, it will be very difficult for operators to adjust to the new requirements. [lxxii]
- During the height of COVID-19 restrictions, as a result of decreased demand for services the hours of work changed for many operators with many employers needing to temporarily stand down workers, and some retrenchments occurring. As a consequence, these workers have found work in other industries which have exacerbated pre-existing skills shortages for these highly skilled employees.
- The Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA) are currently pursuing an apprenticeship pathway to increase training pathways coupled with an experience component as apprentices progress through to the next level of licences. It is hoped this will increase the available talent pipeline for these highly skilled roles. CICA and WA members are working with the LDSC to investigate this pathway option. [lxxiii]

Impacts to Training and Delivery

- There has been a shift in delivery models and modifications to the workplace (i.e. spacing of desks etc) to allow for training and assessment to continue during the pandemic. [lxxiv]
- The State Freight and Logistics Council have identified five priority areas for the transport and logistics sector needed during the recovery phase. This includes identifying any workforce or skill gaps and the training needed in a rapidly changing environment. [lxxv]
- For some organisations training provided in house has mostly ceased as it can no longer be done face to face, however, refresher training for existing staff (i.e. in cab assessments and Verification of Competency (VoCs) assessments for other mobile equipment) has continued. [lxxvi]
- RTOs providing training in this area have reported a lower demand for training across all sectors, as well as limited access to students other than via e-mail, or other online/remote methods. [lxxvii]
- RTOs who participated in the LDSC Industry surveys and Industry Working Groups reported they did not lose any staff due to COVID-19, with many using the JobKeeper payments to retain their services until business activity resumed. [lxxviii]
- There was minimal impact to RTOs from the restrictions in intrastate borders.
- The Federal Governments recently announced JobTrainer package will assist industries to develop their workforce by providing retraining and upskilling opportunities for people to enter industries currently surging as well as helping skilled workers to enter the trucking industry.[lxxix]

Jobs in Demand and Training Required

- There has also been a high rise in the demand for courier and delivery drivers as a result of the sharp increase in online orders for groceries and parcels. [lxxx] IGA announced it will be launching online deliveries services on its new platform IGA shop. This will likely increase the demand for these types of delivery drivers. It is unclear how many jobs will be established in WA, or if they will leverage contractor services to provide delivery services to their customers, similar to Woolworths (i.e. Toll).
- The number of applications per job ad are increasing with employers scaling up recruitment efforts. This may place additional pressure on employers to source quality applicants with quick employment turn-around times as they endeavour to assess the suitability of applications and progress applicants through shorter recruitment cycles.[lxxxi]
- Fast tracked recruitment (sometimes without face to face interviews) is occurring, with candidates in some instances completing the application cycle within 48 hours or less; and rapid upskilling provided to ensure workers can complete required tasks in unfamiliar job settings. This may influence how recruitment is undertaken post-COVID-19 with employers establishing more productive (and alternative) ways of working. [lxxxii]
- In the current climate, to meet demand, businesses are accepting people into roles without previous experience or qualifications (subject to medical fitness and their ability to carry out any manual handling aspects of the role). However this may not be suitable for occupations such as Scheduler or Truck Driver due to the long lead time needed to gain experience in these roles. [lxxxiii]
- Although employers are uncertain as to when they will need to increase their workforce; employers are predicting there will be a spike in demand where they will need to have immediate access to skilled workers in order to provide services needed within the recovery phase. [lxxxiv]
- Companies have highlighted there will be an ongoing need for training regarding hygiene and decontamination practices and protocols to continue to exist outside and beyond the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will form part of their occupational health and safety requirements in the future. [lxxxv]
- The use of skills sets and micro credentialing is viewed by industry as a means to equip the workforce in a manner that is responsive to industry needs. Post COVID-19 this may be a way to ensure the workforce is skilled in a quick way while maintaining the integrity of training. [lxxxvi]
- The Truck Driving occupation has been listed as the fourth of the top twelve occupations in demand. This occupation, already in shortage nationally, was identified as one of the critical and essential occupations needed during the initial stages of the pandemic as well as for the recovery phase.[lxxxvii]
- Truck Drivers and Mobile Crane Operators are not easily replaced. Where highly skilled and experienced Truck Drivers or Crane Drivers have been lost to other industries, employers report it would take a minimum of three to six months to train licenced individuals to an effective, autonomous level due to the long lead time to train and to develop the required experience.[lxxxviii]
- The Freight and Logistics Council of WA (FLCWA) and the Western Roads Federation (WRF) have developed an initiative similar to the Driver Exchange program being implemented by the Victorian Transport Association (VTA) to align Truck Drivers and other transport workers who are out of work due to the COVID-19 pandemic for placement in other industries currently surging. This also includes an element for training and upskilling of workers. This program will assist industry to address issues caused by the national Truck Driver shortage and create a shared labour pool for industry to draw from. [lxxxix]
- Compliance paperwork required to traverse State and Territory borders will likely increase the compliance requirements for Drivers and operators to maintain. Where possible, some employers may consider establishing new Compliance Officer roles or adapting the duties of OSH officers to address this. [xc]
- The biggest issue for some employers is attitude rather than aptitude, as well as resilience. Employers are recognising the need for staff to be trained in mental health strategies. In recognition of this a Transport Industry Mental Health Group has been established to identify and address mental health issues in Transport Industry.[xci]
- Employers would look favourably at potential employees who have completed an introduction to the transport industry skills set. Skills needed are those specific to each industry (i.e. refrigeration, livestock handling), also loading/unloading. Industry would look favourably at skills including the following areas: fatigue management, Main Roads requirements (i.e. mass management), load restraint, basic techniques (i.e. hooking/unhooking), basic maintenance and low stress stock handling. [xcii]

- As companies move into more technology-based operations, assistance with training will be required for current staff and an older workforce to transition into new work modalities particularly for small to medium sized operators.[xciii] Those groups with low technical expertise/literacy, and low Language, Literacy, Numeracy (LLN) skills may be at further risk of experiencing delays in training.[xciv]
- Employers within freight typically provide in-house training to develop competencies. Some employers would look favourably at the addition of a communication skills set to help upskill their existing workers. [xcv]

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