THE BUS INDUSTRY CONFEDERATION

YEAR IN REVIEW

2025-2026



BIC
BUS INDUSTRY CONFEDERATION
moving people

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THE BUS INDUSTRY CONFEDERATION

Who is BIC?

The Bus Industry Confederation (BIC) is the national independent peak body for the Australian Bus and Coach Industry. We represent approximately 160 bus and coach operators, body, chassis and complete bus manufacturers and suppliers, parts and service providers, professional services, and state bus associations on issues of national importance.

Our membership is becoming increasingly diverse as key energy and infrastructure partners join as we transition the fleet to low and zero emissions. The BIC advocates on behalf of our members on a federal level, to ensure the safe and efficient carriage of passengers, along with safe and sustainable operations and supply chains that support the industry.

BIC is in a unique position to represent the Australian bus and coach industry with membership extending to all states and territories.

Buses play a key role in moving large numbers of people during peak travel times and deliver clear benefits to the community. They help reduce traffic congestion, lower emissions and support economic productivity. Just as importantly, frequent local bus services provide access to jobs, education and services, supporting social mobility.

These outcomes are linked to broader benefits, including better public health, lower crime and improved social wellbeing, which in turn reduce pressure on health and justice systems.

Buses are also one of the most cost effective ways to move people to and from their destinations each day, whether in dense urban areas, outer suburbs, regional centres or between cities. In many outer suburban and regional communities, where other public transport options are limited or unavailable, buses are essential.

They help address disadvantage by reducing isolation and easing the financial burden of car ownership. For people facing limited services and economic challenges, buses often provide the only reliable connection to work, education, healthcare and community life.

About Buses



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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This past year has marked a pivotal step forward in the evolution of our organisation and the way we represent our members.

The most significant reform has been our transition from a Council structure to a formal Board. This was not simply a governance change. It was a deliberate move to strengthen accountability, improve transparency, and position the organisation to meet the increasing complexity of our operating environment.

Under the previous model, the Council played an important role in guiding the organisation. However, as the industry has grown in scale, scrutiny, and national importance, it became clear that a more contemporary governance framework was required. The establishment of a Board provides clearer lines of responsibility, stronger oversight, and a sharper strategic focus.

Importantly, this change enhances, not diminishes, member input. The Council now operates in an advisory capacity, ensuring that the voice of members remains central to decision making, while the Board is empowered to act decisively in the best interests of the industry as a whole.

For members, the benefits are tangible. A Board structure enables more timely and effective decision making, greater consistency in national advocacy, and governance aligned with best practice. It also strengthens our credibility with



governments and stakeholders which is critical as we advocate on key issues including decarbonisation, workforce shortages, and the role of local jobs in bus assembly.

This year has also seen a marked increase in our engagement with federal policymakers across all sides of politics. We have strengthened relationships with representatives from the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party, and the Nationals, ensuring the industry's voice is heard consistently and constructively regardless of the political landscape. This bipartisan approach has elevated our standing and improved access at the highest levels of decision making.

In parallel, we have taken important steps toward a more structured and mature working relationship with the Transport Workers' Union.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Recognising that the union represents a significant proportion of the workforce engaged in bus operations, we have focused on establishing clearer channels of engagement and supporting more productive discussions around wages, conditions, and the long-term sustainability of the workforce.

Engagement with our members has also significantly increased. Through a successful national strategy day, ministerial lunches, and strong participation across state and federal conferences, we have created more opportunities for members to directly shape our priorities and engage with key decision makers. These forums have strengthened alignment across the industry and ensured that our advocacy is grounded in the real challenges and opportunities facing operators.

We have also expanded our external voice. Increased use of social media and targeted television appearances has allowed us to more effectively communicate the industry's position to the broader public, ensuring that the role of buses in the national transport task is better understood and recognised.

Encouragingly, the benefits of our governance reform are already evident. Our advocacy is more coordinated, our engagement more strategic, and our ability to respond to emerging challenges more agile.



As Chair, I am confident that these changes have positioned the organisation and our members for the future. We are more unified, more visible, and more effective in representing the interests of the bus industry at a national level.

I thank all members for their continued support and engagement during this important period of transition and progress.



Tony Hopkins, Chair

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



This year has been one of transformation, advocacy, and strengthened national coordination for the bus industry.

Inaugural BIC Board

We began by enhancing our governance framework, establishing a formal Board and transitioning the previous Council to an advisory body. This shift has improved transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight across the organisation. The BIC Council will continue advising the BIC Board.

At the same time, we strengthened national alignment through regular engagement with state Executive Directors and by attending and contributing to every major state conference.

Our membership base was reinforced with the welcome return of BusVIC, reflecting a renewed spirit of collaboration across jurisdictions.

Advocacy

Engagement with government has been a defining feature of the year. We held constructive discussions with Chris Bowen MP on decarbonisation.
We met with Queensland Transport Minister Brent Mickelberg alongside industry leaders to consider the transport implications of the upcoming Olympic Games. Detailed conversations were had with Victorian Transport Minister Gabrielle Williams on key state priorities.

In New South Wales, we participated in a critical roundtable alongside BusNSW, the Transport Workers Union (TWU), senior TWU delegates, and government representatives. This included NSW State Treasurer Daniel Mookhey MLC and NSW Transport Minister John Graham MLC. The conversation focused on improving wages and conditions for drivers, an essential issue central to the sustainability of our workforce.

Strong engagement was maintained at the federal level, meeting with the Federal Transport Minister the Hon Catherine King MP to advocate for national bus policy reform and industry support.

A highlight of the year was the successful BIC National Conference in Perth, which achieved record attendance and reinforced the industry's unity and forward momentum.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Strategy Day

Early in 2026, the conference success was complemented by a highly productive Strategy Day and formal dinner, where we heard from Hon Catherine King MP and a distinguished panel including The Hon Bridget McKenzie, Senator Tony Sheldon, and BIC Chair Tony Hopkins.

The Strategy Day identified three core priorities for the industry: decarbonisation, the creation of local jobs through bus assembly, and addressing workforce shortages.

We also took time to recognise the human side of our industry in 2026. In a moving tribute, we honoured drivers involved in the Bondi shooting tragedy, alongside Senator Sheldon and industry leaders, acknowledging their service and resilience. These drivers drove Australians out of harms way.

Fuel Crisis
Just as we thought we could get on with business..... the global fuel crisis presented significant challenges. BIC responded decisively which secured a seat at the Federal Transport Minister's fuel response roundtable after intense lobbying, issuing multiple media statements, and forming a strategic coalition with Road Freight NSW and the Waste and Recycling sector to ensure the broader transport industry's voice was heard. Our advocacy extended to national media, including coverage on SBS and WIN News.

We advocated for the following, regular inclusion, leaving the diesel sulphur content unchanged, prioritisation of fuel for the bus industry (including school runs for public and private schools) and staggering of times for government employees in order to spread the peak load so the network can cope.

What's next?

Finally, we secured funding for an important workforce initiative aimed at enabling older Australians to work additional hours without impacting their pension supporting both industry needs and workforce participation.

Internally, we farewelled valued team members Andrea and Sangeetha, and welcomed Rachel Moore and Daniel Moon, strengthening our capability for the future.

Together, all these achievements reflect a year of progress, resilience, and strong representation for our members as we continue to shape the future of the bus industry in Australia.



Varenya Mohan-Ram, CEO

OUR BOARD



Board Chair
Tony Hopkins
CEO, CDC
Regional Australia Division,
ComfortDelGro Corporation
Australia



Board Deputy Chair
Steve Heanes
Managing Director
Irizar - Asia Pacific
Region



Stephen Lucas
Director
Warrnambool Bus Lines



Wayne Patch
Director
Transit Australia
Group/Kinetic Group



Caleb Harriott
Director of Operations
& Partnerships
GoTransit Media Group



Rolf Mitchell
State Manager (Bus)
Keolis Australia &
New Zealand



Desmond Armstrong
Chief Executive Officer
Bus & Coach
International (BCI)



Natalie Gough
Chief Operating Officer
West Coast Bus Charters



Jamie Klemm
Managing Director
Sapphire Coast Buslines



Michael Baulch
Director
Emerald Coaches



Jon Tozer
Director of
Commercial Vechicles
BYD Australia

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STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR VISION

An innovative and thriving bus and coach industry that moves people safely and sustainably.

OUR MISSION

A national united voice that builds industry capability and advances the interests of our members and passengers.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

THE NATIONAL UNITED VOICE

Be the trusted voice of the bus and coach industry in Australia

Positively influence the development and review of policy, legislation, regulation, and technical standards

Lead national debate on key issues that impact the industry

Enhance the understanding of the importance of sustainable/public transport

Identify and develop evidence-based policy and research aligned with member priorities

Advocate for policy solutions on member issues to improve the operating environment for the bus and coach sector

Partner with key industry bodies on shared priorities

PRODUCTIVE, SAFE & SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY

Advocate on behalf of operators and suppliers for best practice procurement

Campaign for a national approach to local content and sustainable, thriving supply chains

Advocate to harmonise regulation and standards for greater productivity and efficiency

Represent industry on road safety policy issues

Facilitate the safe and sustainable transition to low and zero emission operations

Support industry to develop strong, diverse, and inclusive workforces with the capacity to deliver and respond to innovation

ENGAGED MEMBERS

Keep members informed of key policy and regulatory matters through effective and targeted communications

Provide diverse event offerings for members to network, share knowledge and create valuable relationships across industry

Provide valuable member engagement with opportunities for member participation

Support our members' diverse and evolving needs

Deliver informative insights and useful resources for industry

Support diverse and inclusive industry committees and working groups

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Deliver services that provide value to our members and reflects their requirements

Ensure continual good governance to facilitate sustainable operations, inclusive membership models and strong industry representation

Ensure ongoing financial viability through revenue diversification

Build and maintain a professional and motivated secretariat to ensure strong policy, advocacy, technical and governance capacity

INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT



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2025 - 2026
EVENTS AT A GLANCE

BIC Member Webinars
28 Aug - Mandatory Climate-Related Financial Disclosure
19 & 23 Sept - NHVR Master Code of Practice Briefings
30 Sept - West Gate Tunnel

BIC Technical Webinars
23 Sept - Driver Safety, Controlled access, roll-over testing & ZEB specifications (#104)
16 Jan - Supplier extraordinary meeting
27 Jan - Disability Standards, Controlled Access, NHVR Master code & TfNSW Fire & Asset Standards

National Conference
29-31 October 2025
Crown Towers, Perth, WA

Industry Awards
30 October 2025
5 Categories awarded in Perth, WA

Ministerial Luncheons
23 Oct - Gabrielle Williams in Melbourne
17 Feb - Brent Mickelberg in Brisbane

Advocacy Functions
11 Mar - Strategic Planning Day in Canberra, ACT
11 Mar - Industry Dinner in Canberra, ACT
12 Mar - A.P.H Meetings in Canberra, ACT

Council Meetings
19 June - Online
21 Aug - Online
29 Oct - FtF Meeting in Perth
29 Oct - BIC & APTIA AGMs
10 April - FtF Meeting in QLD

4 member webinars with 300+ registratiosn received across the series.

200+ attendees across the series.

480+ delegates
36 industry sponsors

61 total registrations
3 luncheon sponsors

76 guests dinner attendees
8 political meetings
8 table sponsors

124 Members registered to attedend the 2025 AGM

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COMING UP IN 2026

Ongoing advocacy priorities

A key priority for BIC CEO Varenya Mohan-Ram is to meet with every Federal Parliamentarian across the political spectrum, government, opposition, and crossbench. To ensure the bus and coach industry is well represented and heard at the national level.

As Australia's National peak body for the Bus and Coach industry, BIC's focus remains firmly on federal engagement, where policy decisions have Nationwide impact on operators, workers, and passengers.

This work is already underway. Varenya has begun building relationships across party lines, recognising that effective advocacy requires a presence in every corner of the Federal Parliament not just with the government of the day.

By engaging with all sides of the political spectrum, BIC ensures its voice is understood by the decision-makers and policy-setters who shape the regulatory and funding landscape for public transport in Australia.

BIC remains committed to ensuring that no policy affecting the bus and coach industry is developed without direct industry input, and that the practical realities facing operators and communities particularly in regional and rural Australia are always part of the national conversation.

APTIA and the year ahead

Industrial relations / APTIA will, in addition to those items listed above that will continue on throughout the next 12 months, with very few exceptions:

- Pensionable Earnings Research Project, Economic Modelling and Papers Produced for Policy Narrative
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator: Bus and Coach Industry Code of Practice
- Skilled Shortage List - OSCA Submission and education piece for Operators and Employees to identify as Articulated bus drivers through Census to ensure that professionalism recognised and to open up opportunities for funding and training pathways for the industry
- Consult with Members regarding the Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award 2020 and opportunities for changes and improvements for the benefit of the industry
- Essential Worker Recognition - Review status and continue to consult and advocate
- Build a Workforce Development Strategy
- Continue to advocate for driver facilities, better known as ‘Drivers for Dunnies’ and identify opportunities for funding and pilot studies.
- Explore Options for Industry-Wide International Labour Agreements



BIC NATIONAL CONFERENCE 25











BIC NATIONAL CONFERENCE 25









BIC's 2025 National Conference, held in Perth from 29 to 31 October, brought together more than 450 delegates from across Australia, making it the sector's largest annual gathering.

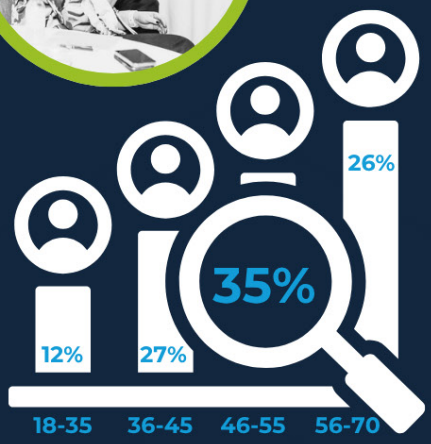
The conference focused on the theme of unity, collaboration and harmonisation, with a strong emphasis on strengthening alignment across industry and government to support future growth. Over two days, delegates explored key issues including industry reform, safety, workforce challenges, industrial relations and the transition to zero-emission buses and supporting infrastructure.

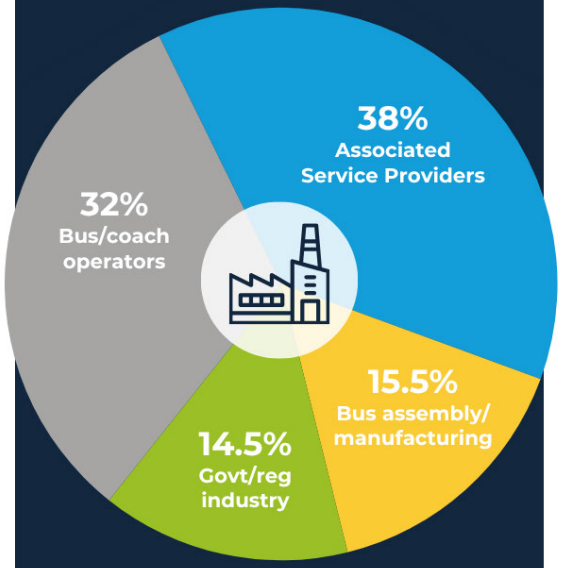
Discussions highlighted the need for coordinated national approaches, particularly in addressing driver shortages, building skills pathways and supporting a safe, sustainable and modern passenger transport network.

The program featured contributions from government leaders, regulators and industry experts, alongside networking events and the National Industry Awards, reinforcing the conference's role as a central forum for collaboration and leadership across the bus and coach sector.

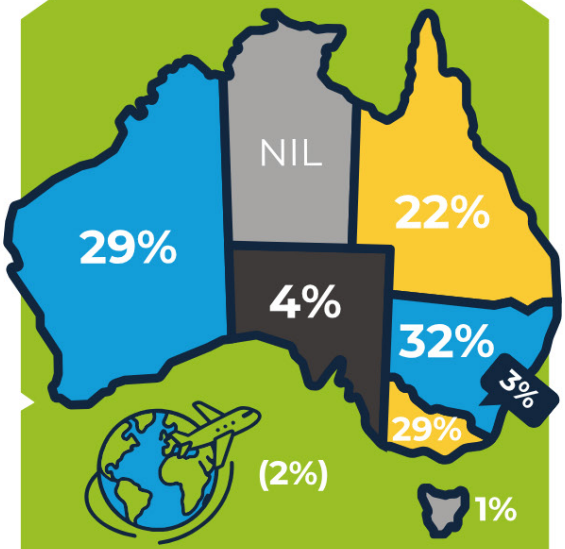
FACTS ABOUT BIC NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025







10% BIC website
67% BIC eDM
5% Industry publ.
18% Word of mouth
<1% Social media





76%
BIC member
17% Non-member
6% State association
1% APTIA

66% Business group travel
5% Family group travel
29% Individual traveller

72% 28%

28% Senior/Exec.
3% Owner/Board Director
33% CEO/ED
30% Manager
5% Other

KEY INDUSTRY EVENTS



Bondi Tragedy Recognition Event – Waverley Bus Depot, February 2026

BIC facilitated a special recognition event at the Waverley Bus Depot at Bondi Junction, joining Senator Tony Sheldon and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Dr Marjorie O'Neill to recognise Transdev John Holland NSW drivers and staff who were on duty during the Bondi tragedy. The event acknowledged the calm professionalism of workers who kept services operating and helped move people safely out of the area.

BIC Strategy Day, 11 March 2026

On 11 March 2026, BIC brought together leaders from across the Australian bus and coach industry at Parliament House for a strategic planning session focused on the future of the sector. The day provided an opportunity for industry representatives to share insights, strengthen collaboration and test priorities that will shape BIC's advocacy and policy agenda in the year ahead. Senator Glenn Sterle and Senator Don Farrell also took time to stop by and speak with members, reinforcing the importance of buses and coaches in keeping communities connected and supporting essential mobility across Australia.

Industry Dinner, 11 March 2026

Following the Strategy Day, BIC hosted its Parliamentary Dinner at Parliament House, bringing together industry leaders and federal parliamentarians for an evening of discussion on the challenges and opportunities facing the sector. The event was facilitated by David Speers and featured keynote remarks from Catherine King MP, Senator Bridget McKenzie, BIC Chair Tony Hopkins and BIC Executive Director Varenya Mohan-Ram.

The evening concluded with a panel discussion featuring Senator Tony Sheldon, Senator Bridget McKenzie and Tony Hopkins, focused on the policy environment and the practical realities affecting operators, passengers and communities. Around 80 industry leaders attended, making the dinner an important forum for direct engagement between industry and decision-makers.

ADVOCACY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT









The Bus Industry Confederation continued its strong advocacy and industry representation throughout the year, engaging directly with senior decision-makers across government, regulatory bodies and the wider transport sector to advance member priorities and support a productive, safe and sustainable bus industry. BIC's advocacy focused on practical regulatory reform, decarbonisation, procurement settings, workforce pressures and ensuring that government policy reflects the operational realities of bus and coach services.

ADVOCACY - GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES





Commonwealth Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Engaged on the National Battery Strategy, electric bus procurement and broader sector issues affecting the bus and coach industry.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Engaged on the Industry Policy Position Paper, low carbon liquid fuels, ADR harmonisation, and the review of local and international road vehicle standards and Road Vehicle Standards legislation.

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR)
BIC continued engagement with the NHVR during the year on regulatory reform and bus safety, including the development of the NHVR Driver Safety Screen Exemption Notice and associated technical guidance to streamline compliant installation of driver safety screens on buses and coaches.

National Transport Commission (NTC)
Engaged through RAC+ meetings, the NTC Industry Forum and broader consultation processes on regulatory and policy matters affecting the sector.

States and Territories

New South Wales
Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
BIC, working with BusNSW, coordinated industry engagement on TfNSW's proposed lithium battery safety standard, and on proposed fire and asset standards affecting bus operations.

Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW)
BIC coordinated industry input on FRNSW's draft Technical Information Sheet, Fire Safety in Electric Bus Depots, including practical feedback on operational and depot safety implications.

Victoria
Department of Transport and Planning
Engaged with Karen Shepherd the Executive Director, Bus Services at the Department of Transport and Planning on Victorian bus supply deferral issues and responded to concerns regarding ceiling prices for bus purchases.

Western Australia
Public Transport Authority WA (PTA WA)
Met with Peter Jones on key operational and policy matters affecting the industry in Western Australia.

STRATEGIC FORUMS & SUMMITS

TWU Bus Industry Roundtable, NSW Parliament

BIC Council Chair Tony Hopkins and Executive Director Varenya Mohan-Ram attended a bus industry roundtable hosted by the Transport Workers' Union (TWU) at New South Wales Parliament.

The roundtable brought together Premier Chris Minns, the NSW Treasurer, the Transport Minister, and the Industrial Relations Minister, alongside BIC and BusNSW, to discuss the pressing challenges facing the industry.

BIC representatives took the opportunity to present the realities confronting an industry under significant strain, spanning wages, safety standards, fleet roadworthiness, and the ongoing impacts of competitive tendering. The roundtable served as a meaningful demonstration of shared concerns across industry and labour, with BIC noting it as a successful platform for collaborative dialogue.

BIC welcomes this type of cross-sector engagement and looks forward to continued participation in conversations that drive meaningful policy outcomes for operators, workers, and passengers across New South Wales.

National Future Transport Summit 2025

In September 2025, BIC National Policy and Operations Manager Glen Bortolin attended and participated in the inaugural National Future Transport Summit 2025, which brought together government, industry, and community to discuss and shape a shared future for connected and automated transport.

BIC had the opportunity to speak on the panel "Expecting Megalopolis", which examined the challenges of growing Australian cities, expanding urban boundaries, and increasing density, and the critical role of public transport, particularly buses, in enabling liveable and sustainable megacities.

The Summit, chaired by journalist and ABC Insiders host David Speers, concluded with six key recommendations covering safety, productivity, sustainability, social legitimacy, infrastructure, and planning and collaboration, developed collaboratively by the Summit Consortium and to be finalised by the Centre for Connected and Automated Transport (CCAT).



PARLIAMENTARY & MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT



Transport Industry Briefings, March 2026 - present

Since March 2026, following the outbreak of conflict in Iran, BIC has been actively participating in weekly briefings hosted by Hon Minister Catherine King MP, addressing matters relating to fuel supply security and price volatility.

On 29 April 2026, BIC Executive Director Varenya Mohan-Ram attended a Transport Industry Briefing hosted by Minister Catherine King and her office. Key issues discussed included fuel supply and price spikes, fringe benefits tax arrangements supporting workers with additional fuel cost assistance, and the need for national fuel prioritisation for the public transport sector.

Varenya acknowledged the crisis as a global issue, welcomed the Government's reduction of fuel excise and removal of road user charges, but raised concerns that rising diesel costs and reduced supplier payment timeframes are creating significant cash flow pressures for operators.

He also urged the Government to maintain current diesel sulphur content standards given the modern engine requirements of the Australian bus fleet.

BIC looks forward to continued engagement with the Minister's office on these practical policy matters, which carry real consequences for operators, workers, passengers, and communities particularly across regional and rural Australia.

WORKING GROUP PARTICIPATION



BIC actively participates in the following working groups and committees on behalf of the bus and coach industry.

Autonomous Vehicles & Technology
- National Future Transport Consortium – Monthly

Small Business & Economics
- ACCI Small Business Committee – Monthly
- ACCI Economics and Industry Policy Committee – Monthly

Industrial Relations & Workplace Policy
- ACCI Workplace Policy Committee (IR) – Monthly
- ACCI Employment & Skills Committee – Monthly
- ACCI Work Health & Safety Committee – Monthly
- Industrial Working Group (APTIA) – Quarterly
- JIR Industry/Practitioner Advisory Committee, Journal of Industrial Relations – Quarterly
- Road Transport Advisory Group, Fair Work Commission – Ad hoc

Driver Training, Health & Shortages
- National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework (AustRoads) – Bi-monthly
- Driver Health Screening Working Group (NTC) – Ad hoc
- Addressing Heavy Vehicle Driver Shortages (ISA / Senator Glen Sterle) – Bi-monthly

Heavy Vehicle Regulation & Safety
- Bus Code of Practice Working Group (NHVR) – Monthly
- NHVR Bus Technical Working Group – Quarterly
- Vehicle Standards Consultative Forum / VSCF (DITRDCSA) – Six-monthly

Skills, Training & Workforce
- Bus Industry Catch Up (Industry Skills Australia) – Every six weeks
- Strategic Workforce Advice Panel (Ausmasa) – Quarterly

SUBMISSIONS & ADVOCACY PAPERS

TfNSW Lithium Battery Onboard Energy Storage System Safety | December 2025

The BIC and BusNSW acknowledge the intent of TfNSW wanting to ensure ESS technology is safe and to standards through TS 00034, and the considerable level of work that has been invested into developing the standard. However, the current proposal does not acknowledge the stringent standards in place for buses at a national regulatory level such as Australian Design Rules (ADRs).

It only acknowledges them for road-rail vehicles. Buses are already subject to the same stringent safety requirements as other road-going vehicles (cars, trucks, and buses). Standalone standards not aligned with existing stringent national safety legislation, standards and TfNSW accreditation schemes already in place, will result in regulatory duplication and conflict without any safety benefit.

Introducing new competencies or whole-of-life assurance expectations without transition time, guidance, or support pathways would impose significant burdens during the ZEB transition. Its implication on other road vehicles such as non TfNSW buses and other TfNSW owned road going assets such as cars is unclear.

Download TfNSW Lithium Battery Onboard Energy Storage System Safety

National Vehicle User Charges

The BIC welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the National Transport Commission (NTC) on the heavy vehicle charges consultation report.

The BIC has made a general response to the consultation paper and identified areas for NTC's attention, specifically relevant to the bus and coach industry.

Download the National Vehicle User Charges

Heavy Vehicle National Law Statutory Instruments

The BIC welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the National Transport Commission (NTC) on the proposed statutory instruments that will support the updated Heavy Vehicle National Law (NHVL).

The BIC has made a general response to the consultation paper and identified areas for NTC's attention, specifically relevant to the bus and coach industry and to reiterate what was provided in our response in November 2024.

Download the Heavy Vehicle National Law Statutory Instruments



SUBMISSIONS & ADVOCACY PAPERS



Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Amendment 2025

BIC welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts (DITRDCSA) consultation on the exposure draft of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Amendments 2025.

The BIC has only responded to specific sections relevant to the bus and coach industry.

Download the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Amendment 2025

Harmonisation of vehicle lighting standards 2025 | October 2025

The BIC welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) consultation on Harmonisation of vehicle lighting standards.

BIC members provided constructive feedback to the proposed ADRs and some commentary which, while related to lighting, sits partially outside the official remit but is included given members concerns.

Download the Harmonisation of vehicle lighting standards 2025

NHVR Master Code of Practice - Public Consultation Draft | September 2025

BIC and the Australian Public Transport Industrial Association (APTIA) welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's (NHVR) Master Code of Practice - Public Consultation Draft. The bus and coach industry supports the introduction of industry specific risk, hazards and controls in the draft Master Code of Practice (the Code).

However, we also strongly advocate for controls that are appropriate to the nature, complexity and size of the duty holder's transport operation.

Download the NHVR Master Code of Practice - Public Consultation Draft

Harmonised ZEB Specifications Consultation | July 2025

The (BIC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the National ZEB Harmonisation Working Group's Industry consultation on Zero Emission Buses: proposed nationally consistent set of minimum requirements for a base model bus. We value the good working relationship to further work to a harmonised outcome.

Download the Harmonised ZEB Specifications Consultation

ADVOCACY - TECHNICAL



ZEB Harmonisation
Advocated strongly for National ZEB Harmonisation, including mandating range design and warranty battery degradation standards.

Diesel Sulphur standards
Major lobbying campaign to maintain Diesel Sulphur standards, countering repeated pressure from fuel companies and representing public transport at National Emergency Management Agency fuel briefings.

State/territory and federal regulators
Raised the issue of misalignment between state/territory and federal regulators at the Australian Design Rule meeting, pursued as a tri-partisan matter in collaboration with the Truck Industry Council (TIC) and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI).

Acoustic Vehicle Alerting Systems (AVAS)
Negotiated an outcome allowing local testing using acceptable alternative methods, avoiding costly overseas testing.

Opt-In Model Classification
Secured government confirmation that vehicles re-applied under expiring Opt-In approvals with no design changes will be treated as existing models, avoiding unnecessary ADR updates.

Supplier clarity
Continuing to lobbying the Victorian government to secure clarity for suppliers and on new orders, future plans and ZEB bus trials.



TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS, SUBMISSIONS & REGULATIONS



Surveys
Conducted detailed industry surveys seeking industry voice on Lithium-Ion Batteries, fire standards, cyber security, Disability standards, Harmonised lighting requirements, and Zero emission bus procurement.

Submissions
Published over 12 submissions on National ZEB Harmonisation, harmonised lighting standards, disability standards, ADR matters, cybersecurity in vehicles, bus fire mitigation standards, and national consistency in automotive regulatory matters.

Regulation advocacy
Advocated on the TfNSW Lithium-Ion battery, fire, and asset certification requirements, securing more reasonable consultation timelines.

Relevant
Submitted detailed response on proposed bespoke fire-retardant chemical ban that could affect vehicle suppliers and spare parts availability.

Regulation Development

UN ECE standards for fire safety and cybersecurity
Successfully raised recommendations to adopt UN ECE standards for fire safety and cybersecurity in buses; government is expected to release a paper recommending adoption of UN cybersecurity standards.

Driver Safety Screen guidelines
Launched the Driver Safety Screen guidelines in September 2025 in Brisbane, developed in partnership with NHVR, and Transport for Brisbane, with positive industry reception.

Width and Mass reform
Progressed Width and Mass reform through multiple workshops with NHVR; width is advancing via an updated CAB notice (short-term). while mass reform continues against pushback from road managers.

Controlled Access Bus (CAB) dimensional study
Initiated a detailed CAB dimensional study to address rear overhang challenges for Euro 6 CABs, with completion scheduled for end of June 2026.

Disability Standards reform
Engaged with the Disability Standards reform process, advocating on practical improvements to wheelchair spaces, boarding points, and colour-contrast testing for both new vehicles and transitional fleet requirements.

Door Safety Standard TS160
Ongoing work with TfNSW, BusNSW and suppliers on Door Safety Standard TS160, addressing ongoing compliance and in-service reliability issues.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT & COMMITTEES

Committees

Vehicle Standards Consultative Forum (VSCF)

Actively representing the bus industry on the VSCF, driving advocacy for harmonised regulations and improved Australian Design Rules.

Ausmasa Strategic Workforce Advisory Panel
Appointed to the Ausmasa Strategic Workforce Advisory Panel (2-year term) representing the bus industry to help drive training framework direction for bus and coach technicians.

Children Left in Vehicles (CLIV)
Participated in the UN Working Group for CLIV continuing to advance the prospect of Australian solutions being adopted as a global standard for buses.

Driver Drowsiness and Distraction Warning Systems (DDADWS)
Participated in the UN Working Group for DDADWS, contributing Australian industry perspectives to international standards development.

Technical support

Over 35 issues progressed addressing technical, compliance and regulatory matters affecting Australian bus suppliers and operators.

BIC supported members on a wide range of technical matters:
- ADR clarifications
- Vehicle compliance
- Seat belt regulations
- ZEB standards
- Fire and cyber security requirements
- Door standards
- State-specific procurement and operator requirements.

Technical webinars

BIC hosted four technical webinars informing members of the latest technical developments and regulatory changes affecting the industry.

Technical member support

BIC conducted an Extraordinary Suppliers Meeting to address the surprise introduction of TfNSW fire, and asset standards, securing more practical consultation periods.





SUBMISSION AND COMMITTEES



Submissions

- Fair Work Commission: Review into Part Time Provisions in Modern Awards
- Fair Work Commission: Application for Urgent Road Transport Contractual Chain Order - Fuel Cost Recovery
- Fair Work Commission: Application to Vary Modern Award - Fuel Allowance
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator - Submission to Review of
- National Transport Commission - Submission to
- Transport for New South Wales: Submission for Research into Pensionable Earnings.
- Treasury: Review of Mutual Recognition of Occupational Licensing Schemes

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

APTIA imputed into the following submissions to Fair Work Commission, DEWR, and others:

- Protecting Penalty and Overtime Rates Bill
- Review of Part Time Provisions
- Secure Jobs, Better Pay Review
- Closing Loopholes Statutory Review
- Inquiry into the National Employment Standards
- Working from Home - Clerks Award
- Australian Apprenticeship Priority List
- VET Workforce Blueprint Submission

Committees

- National Transport Commission: Heavy Vehicle Health Advisory Group- Driver Health Screening
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator: Assessment Panel- Master Code of Practice
- Industry Skills Australia: Addressing Heavy Vehicle Driver Shortages Project Steering Committee
- Industry Skills Australia: TLI Training Package Development - Fatigue Management Training Update
- Fair Work Commission: Road Transport Advisory Group - Contractual Chain Order
- Fair Work Commission: Enterprise Agreements and Bargaining Advisory Group
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Workplace Policy Committee
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Employment and Training Committee
- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Work Health & Safety and Workers Compensation Committee
- AustRoads: National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework Review Committee
- Journal of Industrial Relations: Industry Advisory Committee
- Australian Labour and Employment Relations Association: Research & Publications Subcommittee
- New South Wales Government and Transport Workers Union Roundtable

ROAD TRANSPORT CONTRACTUAL CHAIN ORDER

Inclusion of passenger vehicle transportation industry in the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order

In April 2026, the Fair Work Commission published the Road Transport Contractual Chain Order - Fuel Cost Recovery - 2026. The order commenced on the 21 April 2026.

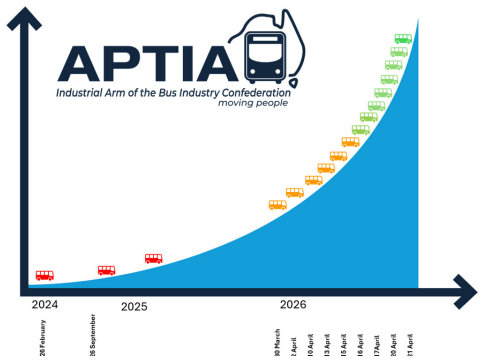
This Order impacts everyone (excluding cash in transport) in a road transport contractual chain including passenger vehicle transport and it extends to others in the contractual chain including government and other non-road transport entities that sit at the Apex of the road transport contractual chain.

This is the first time that the passenger vehicle transport industry has been covered by a road transport contractual chain order application. As a direct result of advocacy by APTIA, the passenger vehicle transport industry now has access to fuel cost recovery mechanisms.

We did this through:

- In 2025, APTIA represented the passenger vehicle transport industry at the Road Transport Advisory Group on matter MS2024/4 - even though we were initially (and ultimately after consultation) excluded from this particular order, we petitioned to be involved in the RTAG, meaning that we were on the minds of the Applicants and Decision Makers for the Order made on 20 April.
- In late March, when the Urgent Conference was called for by the TWU and ARTIO, APTIA was there asking where the passenger vehicle industry was in all of this.
- In the next correspondence, because of APTIA's advocacy, the passenger vehicle industry was listed as an interested party, that allowed APTIA to provide oral submissions at the urgent conference held on 25 March 2026.
- As a result of APTIA's ongoing presence and advocacy, passenger vehicle transport was nominated on Application.
- APTIA ensured that the passenger vehicle transport industry was represented throughout the proceedings from 8-13 April by:
- Providing written submissions to the proceedings;
- Appearing at five full days of hearings;
- Making oral submissions, including ensuring that obligations between primary parties were clearly stated in the Order. This was crucial to the application of RTCCOs to our industry where the vast majority of our industry are considered primary parties in conjunction with government;
- Adducing evidence by way of witness examination; and
- Filing witness statements and evidence in support of our position.
- On 20 April 2026, the Fair Work Commission published an order that ensure that our industry had the same access to fuel cost recovery mechanisms as our colleagues in the broader road transport industry.

In the end, APTIA was successful in ensuring that the passenger vehicle industry's voice was heard and that we were included in this order.



PENSIONABLE EARNINGS TRAP ADVOCACY & RESEARCH PROJECT



This year, we developed a proposal that we presented for grant opportunities, offering a multi-disciplinary research initiative to model and drive reforms to the Commonwealth Aged Pension to "Close the Pension Trap" and increase the availability of experienced bus drivers.

The Research Objectives are:

- Economic Modelling: Identify approach to change aged pension rules required to trigger workforce re-entry or retention for senior drivers; model tax, fiscal, inflation and superannuation contribution impacts; estimate likely changes to workforce composition and impacts on service delivery

- Policy plausibility: Build industry support and awareness through existing consultation and engagement forums, including gathering case studies and qualitative inputs from operators

- Public Research: Collate stakeholder feedback and public sentiment analysis to demonstrate viability to Australian Governments

Research has already commenced through engaging members at state conferences.

The maximum an ordinary aged pension recipient could earn is $512.00 per fortnight without it impacting their aged pension payment. This includes both the Work Bonus and the Income Free Area. For example, a casual School Bus Drivers, the minimum hourly rate is $35.26 per hour, or 14.52 hours per fortnight before their aged pension is impacted. School runs are rostered at a minimum of 4 hours per day. That's the equivalent of three and a half school bus runs per fortnight. Each fortnight, a minimum of ten school bus runs per fortnight are required.

Furthermore, an increase in the operating capacity of our drivers mean that they would be able to work in blocks of work, creating operational efficiencies for our Operators and productivity improvements for the network.

If the earning capacity of our existing drivers were lifted, this would allow these drivers to undertake more runs without penalty. It does not take work away from other workers. These are shifts that are unfilled due to staff shortages.

The Work Bonus Income Bank is a system that allows Age Pension recipients to earn money from working without it reducing their pension payments. It is designed to encourage seniors to stay in or re-enter the workforce, especially where that work is seasonal (for example, working as Santa in a shopping centre at Christmas).
(cont.)

PENSIONABLE EARNINGS TRAP ADVOCACY & RESEARCH PROJECT



Ordinarily, a pensioner can earn up to $300 each fortnight without their payments being reduced. If they earn less than $300, the unused portion is saved in an "income bank" to be used in the future, up to a maximum of $11,800.

Once the income bank is exhausted, every dollar earned above the fortnightly earnings limit steeply reduces a pensioner's payments. The earnings limit for singles is $218 for singles and $380 for couples, and payment reductions are 50c or 25c per dollar respectively.

Since 2022, the Commonwealth Government has implemented several reforms to the Work Bonus income bank to incentivise workforce participation among senior Australians. Following the 2022 Jobs and Skills Summit, the government initially introduced a temporary $4,000 "boost" to the maximum Work Bonus balance, increasing the limit from $7,800 to $11,800.

These changes were made permanent in 2024. Under this permanent framework, the maximum bank balance remains at $11,800, and all new eligible pension recipients now receive an upfront $4,000 credit to their income bank upon commencement rather than starting at a zero balance.

The adjustments we propose as part of this research project are designed to provide older Australians with greater flexibility to engage in paid employment, without an immediate reduction in their pension entitlements, directly addressing labour shortages in our industry.

NHVR MASTER CODE OF PRACTICE



NHVR Master Code of Practice - with Dean Moule Workplace & Tech

Technical and Industrial Relations came together to successfully advocate for the bus and coach industry after the NHVR released a draft Master Code of Practice mid-2025. The initial draft contained a 'Bus Activities' section that, after extensive consultation, was found to lack the requisite rigour to form part of the Code.

As a result of our advocacy, it was agreed that the draft containing 'Bus Activities' would be removed from the final Code, with an industry-specific Code of Practice to be developed in consultation with industry in 2026.

We also advocated that the final Code clearly articulate through case studies the role that parties have in the Chain of Responsibility (see excerpt from Master Code of Practice)

To achieve this outcome, we met regularly with the NHVR, forming part of the expert Assessment Panel. Our input utilised information gathered through an industry-wide survey to collect feedback on the draft Code. In addition to the survey, a series of targeted one-on-one consultations were held with key operators, technical specialists, and state associations. BIC also undertook a campaign to hold industry specific briefings of which around 75 people registered at short notice.

As part of the formal submission process, BIC prepared and lodged a comprehensive submission to the NHVR, developed in close collaboration with and with the support of all state bus associations. This submission consolidated national feedback and articulated key industry recommendations including further consultation, minimisation of regulatory overlap and identification of transport authorities as Duty Holders within the Chain of Responsibility.

APTIA KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Occupational Shortage List

Last year, we said that the inclusion of bus drivers and diesel mechanics on the national Occupational Shortage List (OSL) was a major focus.

THIS YEAR, we can proudly say that we have achieved that status and we hope to replicate it next year.

We are also advocating for new pathways for drivers to be recognised as skilled professionals through the OSCA classification scheme - this will open up new opportunities for funding and employment pathways.

Multi-Employer Bargaining

Multi-Employer Bargaining has kicked off - APTIA played a key role in bringing together industry, government and unions to the table to initiate discussions about this important industrial milestone.

Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships through ACCI Committee Membership

APTIA is a working member of the ACCI Workplace Policy Committee, Employment and Skills Committee, Work Health & Safety and Workers' Compensation Committee.
These Committees continue to provide real opportunities to have input into National Policy and offer key strategic alliances with associations and organisations facing similar challenges of workforce shortages, occupational violence and increasing regulatory burden on all business.

Addressing Heavy Vehicle Shortages Steering Committee

APTIA drove the bus and coach narrative within the Industry Skills Australia - Addressing Heavy Vehicle Shortages Steering Committee.

The Committee developed the Draft National Heavy Vehicle Driver Action Plan with members including the Australian Road Transport Industrial Association, Transport Workers Union, Road Freighters Australia, Australian Trucking Association.

In 2024, roundtables led by the Australian Trucking Association and Senator Glenn Sterle, attended by BIC, focused on strategies to attract, retain, and develop the HV driver workforce and this project is a direct result of those initiatives.

The project is funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

APTIA KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



PET Funding

APTIA secured PET Funding to deliver training and provide materials to educate members in relation to recent industrial relations reforms and to assist businesses in complying with current and new Federal workplace relations laws. After consultation with the APTIA Council, the program addresses increased regulatory complexity and compliance risk, particularly for small to medium operators through correct application of Modern Awards, Classifications and Industrial Instruments.

We will assist our members to identify and apply the correct Instrument to their workplace and individual employees.

We will also use the recent FWO v Coles & Woolworths (Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) v Woolworths Group Limited and Coles Supermarkets Australia Pty Ltd [2025] FCA 1092) case to highlight the importance of correct record keeping and Award compliance.

As a part of this training, industry will also be provided with training on the recent changes to the Delegates Rights clause in keeping with the December 2025 decision (Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union v Australian Industry Group [2025] FCAFC 187).
The program will be delivered with associated materials by 30 June 2026.

APTIA Breakfast Series

Relaunched APTIA Breakfast Series - with breakfasts held across our membership network in Perth and Adelaide and further events scheduled for Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in the second half of 2026.

NTC Driver Health Screening

Strongly advocated to the NTC on the unique position that the bus industry is in with respect to health screening. We secured recognition of the disproportionate impact that increases to health screening requirements would have on our drivers. Further advocacy is required at a State Level.

Driving Force

Driving Force, APTIA's quarterly member update, has been refined this year to deliver clearer, more practical content in a format that is easier to engage with.

The focus is shifting towards shorter, more targeted updates that support members on complex and fast-moving issues, including webinar delivery, CCO and fuel updates, and broader compliance matters.