



**Heavy Transport Enforcement
Traffic Tactical Investigations**

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The road transport sector in SA currently employs approximately 30,000 people. A doubling of the freight task is predicted within SA by 2020. Of that volume about 80% is predicted to be by road freight. Within SA there is approximately 100,000 km's of road network within a landmass of 984,377 square kilometres. For the year ending 31 March 2001 approximately 46 million tonnes of freight was conveyed by roadⁱ. This is growing annually.

Vast distances and remote areas provide challenges for community policing, especially the rigors of traffic law enforcement. Many rural highways traverse arid areas with long distances between either roadhouses or towns.

All uniform police officers share some responsibility for enforcement of traffic related legislation and regulations within SA. Police resources are allocated to geographic districts called Local Service Areas (LSA's) where the local police commander is responsible for the provision of all policing services, crime reduction strategies and road safety. Police services delivered include criminal investigations, general policing services and traffic enforcement. Local police are supplemented corporately from specialist areas on a needs basis by the provision of human and physical resources with a variety of knowledge, skills and equipment to assist with both proactive and reactive policing strategies.

The SA road fatality toll for the last few years has remained fairly constant.ⁱⁱ In accord with the National Road Safety Strategy and in conjunction with other contributory initiatives the SA Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans aim to reduce the impact of road trauma. Fatality rates in SA for 2003 were 10.2 per 100,000 of population, higher than the Australian average of 8.2. SA aims to achieve a reduction to at least 5.6 per 100,000 of population by 2010. This would require the annual SA fatality rate not to exceed 86. Improved road use behaviour by the impact of legislation, education and enforcement is anticipated to contribute about 22% of that reduction.ⁱⁱⁱ

Heavy vehicles are involved in about 16% of fatal road crashes that occur annually in SA. In SA a recent survey revealed that 30% of the heavy transport drivers contacted exceeded 85 hours per week driving. Regulatory controls generally restrict this to a total of 72 hours per week.^{iv}

Additional resources are available to assist locally based police. Traffic Support Branch provides a central group of specialists who have a State- wide traffic policing responsibility. Personnel available include major crash investigators, training personnel, traffic intelligence officers, highway patrol officers, and a variety of other operational police personnel. Two motor mechanics are employed to assist with vehicle examinations.

Police use a variety of specialised instruments to assist in their enforcement endeavours. These include:

- Speed detection equipment (both static and mobile)
- Static Traffic Cameras
- Mechanical vehicle inspection tools
- Mobile data terminals (communications, command and control)
- Radio communications
- Radar detector detection equipment
- Engine management computer readers

The SA Police traffic policing focus aims to provide policing crash reduction strategies that address:

- Education – Provide communication and awareness of road safety issues, traffic related laws and the negative impacts of road trauma to the community
- Engineering – Understand the contribution vehicles, vehicle dynamics, road and traffic engineering make to crash reduction strategies and have a capacity to identify and report potential road hazards or vehicle defects
- Enforcement – Deliver effective and efficient policing services to contribute to effective law enforcement and compliance to road laws.

The Traffic Operations Unit (TOU) provides a core group of 27 operational police support personnel who provide a corporate focus on heavy transport road safety issues and maintain a significant and valuable pool of knowledge in relation to traffic policing. Members comprise experienced operational traffic police (with an average of 19 years traffic enforcement experience per member). Regular training of skills and knowledge occurs to maintain skills and awareness of evolving legislative change, road safety, transport issues and police procedures.

The necessity for consistent, effective targeted enforcement has been discussed at many forums in Australia in recent years. On road enforcement by either police or transport authorities is expensive to deliver and sustain. There has been considerable acceptance of responsibility for performance-based incentives that contribute to road safety within the road transport sector. This evolutionary move towards increased levels of voluntary compliance, adherence to codes of practice and heavy vehicle accreditation schemes is steadily progressing. Initiatives such as these combine principals of ownership and inducement that aim to provide a value added environment with the benefit of enhanced road safety, while offering capacity to maintain or improve access and productivity.

The level playing field concept where the same level of compliance applies to all transport operators has been widely discussed amongst the road transport sector and road safety stakeholders.

Police are aware that there is an element of participants who routinely flout adherence to road safety requirements thus gaining competitive advantage over those who strive to comply (at least to minimum regulatory requirements) often incurring considerable implementation costs to do so.

'Chain of Responsibility' legislation seeks to address casting the scope of responsibility for on road safety performance beyond the driver and operator. This concept where others who through their actions or inactions are in a position to influence the drivers safe conduct on a journey are held accountable, will soon become law in SA and ultimately across the nation. Initially this principal will apply to mass, dimension and loading offences. It is envisaged that this will evolve to include speeding and fatigue management modules as well. Penalty provisions will include enhanced powers to conduct investigations to support prosecution of 'chain of responsibility' related offences. These will include provisions for corporate multipliers to ensure that penalties may substantially impact and evoke change to inappropriate work practices beyond the driver and operator.

Road safety and transport regulations, traffic laws and compliance measures are constantly changing. The challenge for enforcement, particularly police operational on road enforcement is to remain relevant. It is necessary for police to ensure that meaningful outcomes and performance indicators that contribute towards road crash and road trauma reduction are achieved. This is about sensible use of resources and better utilisation of planning strategies and intelligence.

SA Police traffic enforcement significantly focuses upon 'The Fatal Five' identified from SA road crash statistics as major contributors to both the number and severity of road crashes. These comprise:

- Speed
- Fatigue
- Seat Belts
- Drink driving (& drugs)
- Vulnerable road users (Pedestrians, motorcycle riders and cyclists)

South Australia Police have formed the Traffic Tactical Investigations Group to investigate issues that are determined to negatively impact upon road safety.

“The enforcement response must be tailored, but this requires resources, skill and time. Enforcement can also be more focused by developing risk based enforcement strategies, for example by concentrating enforcement efforts on high risk firms.”^v

The SAPOL Traffic Tactical Investigations Group is currently focussed upon issues that can be attributed to Fatal Five categories, but are specifically related to the road freight transport sector and determined as strategically important to gain crash reductions.^{vi} The number of personnel allocated to this Group is dynamic and staffed according to identified task needs. This Group is supported by the permanent allocation of a Field Intelligence Officer from the Traffic Intelligence Section.

Data is collated from a wide variety of sources. These include industry contacts, informants, criminal history, traffic offence history, road crashes, traffic volumes, vehicle classifications, information on culture and practice, driver and operator preferences and route selection. Safe-T-Cam traffic camera journey information and checking station sightings can assist.

A management process has been developed which allocates responsibility and accountability. Operators and drivers determined to be high risk are identified by content provided within intelligence target packages produced by the Traffic Intelligence Section who have collated, analysed and formed assumptions from the available data.

Intelligence analysis about emerging patterns by individuals, groups or organisations is then provided to a management team at Traffic Support Branch who determine prioritisation of police resources.

A target package that has been authorised for action is then provided to the Traffic Tactical Investigations Group. The management team would generally provide parameters to indicate timeframe, feedback requirements, resources and priority to the task. The Group investigators determine shifts, locations and tactics to locate and process targets. Enforcement action could result in a number of outcomes, including the grounding of a driver (for up to 24 hours) and the issuing of Infringement notices, court prosecutions, seizure and forfeiture of property, referral to drug diversion counselling and vehicles being defected (major/minor).

Issues:

- Identified significant non-compliance to ADR 65 Speed Limiting provisions – tampering, bypass and devices
- Located illicit drugs – possession for sale
- Located illicit drugs – personal use
- Located additional regulation log books
- Located radar detectors
- Located weapons
- Located Cash
- Dangerous Goods (mixed DG cargo with food produce)
- Brakes of prime movers wound off
- Evidence of poor vehicle maintenance
- Seat belts removed
- Brake and cabin lights isolation switches
- Hinged registration number plates
- Tampering and removal of compliance plates
- Grinding off of trailer identifiers
- Poor adherence to fatigue management regulations and guidelines
- Speeding
- Attempts at avoidance
- Prevalence of recidivist offenders

TAC group police frequently conduct mechanical examinations (involving climbing in, around and under the vehicle) at the roadside interception in an attempt to locate any equipment modifications suspected to contribute in non-compliance to ADR 65 or examine for vehicle roadworthiness.

Many causal factors may contribute to the frequency and occurrence of the issues listed above routinely discovered by police. Those mentioned here are not exhaustive and are mentioned to evoke discussion.

- Profit motivation (how much is enough?)
- Fierce competition (low margins)
- Poor business acumen (know your costs)
- Perception of Risk (likelihood of being caught wrongdoing?)
- Risk Taker culture (a proportion of risk takers – law breakers)
- Workplace culture (reluctance to change?)
- Drug addiction (frequency of use, more you take – more you need)
- Communication (Knowledge of changing regulatory requirements)
- Driver standards (shortage of skilled drivers)

SAPOL considers the TAC Group (Task Force) approach demonstrates a relatively low cost strategy that provides best use of resources. Targeting high-risk drivers and operators. When legislative provisions are invoked which support chain of responsibility investigations, South Australia Police will continue to work together with Transport SA to pursue road crash reduction strategies targeting those within the transport chain who may negatively and routinely influence unsafe on road performance. It is imperative that those who are in a position to influence safe on road behaviour and operations by transport drivers be held accountable for deliberate inappropriate decisions and intentional disregard for road safety.

South Australia Police continue to work together with representatives of the road transport sector and other road safety stakeholders to persist in our endeavours at road crash reduction.

REFERENCES

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.abs.gov.au>

ⁱⁱ Transport SA Road Crash Statistics
http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/road_use/roadcrash.asp

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Transport Council - National Heavy Vehicle Safety Action Plan 2003-2005 Pg 8
Strategic Objective 3 – More effective speed management

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ South Australian Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 Pg 4

^v Dr Angela Baker et al; SA Truck Driver Fatigue Study - Centre for Sleep Research, University of South Australia, June 2004

^{vi} Arie FREIBERG, Professor of Criminology, The University of Melbourne, "Achieving Compliance Through Strategic Enforcement" Pg 14 For NTC Conference 7/8 March 2002.