

# OPINION

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## EDITORIAL

# Road safety on our highways full of trucks



**M**ONDAY'S fiery truck fatal at Cooranbong is the latest in a series of horrific road accidents on major east coast highways in recent weeks.

Not all have involved trucks, but the industry's peak body, the Australian Trucking Association, is concerned about a substantial increase in the number of people killed in accidents involving trucks in NSW, and has called for a series of reforms as a result.

One of its proposals is that the Australian Transport Safety Bureau be given responsibility for investigating truck fatalities, which are at present handled by state and territory coroners. The trucking association believes this process is too time-consuming, and that more would be learned, safety-wise, if the bureau – which investigates air, sea and rail accidents – was given this added duty.

It is true that the bureau produces a substantial amount of information about safety in the modes of transport for which it has jurisdiction. But it, too, can take time to finalise its investigations. On Tuesday, it released a report into an incident at Perth airport that took place a month short of two years ago. A lot would depend on funding, and to this end the trucking association says the bureau would need more than \$4 million a year to investigate truck accidents.

In the meantime, the industry already has a substantial amount of trend information about truck accidents. In its newsletters to members, the trucking association promotes a compendium of truck accident statistics kept by one of the industry's biggest insurers, National Transport Insurance or NTI.

Issued biennially since 2002, the reports show that inappropriate speed is the most

common cause of truck accidents, followed by fatigue. In the most recent examination of 606 crashes in 2015, NTI found that speed was the predominant cause of 21 per cent of truck crashes, and that 29 per cent of "major" truck crashes were rollovers. Truck fires accounted for one in 10 accidents. Mechanical failures were the major cause of just 3.5 per cent of crashes.

The road transport industry has long had a reputation as a hard industry, with demanding delivery schedules and alleged amphetamine use to counter fatigue. Reforms have been put in place in recent years but a rising death toll in NSW and a consistent national accident rate in the NTI study shows there is more to be done. Attention to speed – both by truck drivers and those around them – is the obvious place to start.

**ISSUE: 38,700.**

## GUNILLA BURROWES

### Decades of work yet imbalance remains

**M**ELINDA Gates said recently, "we're sending our daughters into workplaces designed for dads".

How can this still be the case? Why is it taking so long for workplaces to embrace gender equity, especially considering that we have been working on improving equity in workplaces now for decades.

So, why so slow?

I have worked for almost three decades in male-dominated engineering workplaces, and have contributed to the gender equity issue as a parallel career alongside my engineering one. I believe there are three fundamental reasons why progress in workplaces has been so slow and why we will continue to struggle unless these causes are addressed.

In the workplace, gender and gender equity have been seen as a problem or an issue about women for women to solve. A solution will not be found until this sentiment changes. This is a gender issue which means it is an issue about men and women and this fundamental shift in understanding and action is important for progress to be made. That is, we need to engage everyone in the workplace, women and men, to become aware, understand the issues and work together on the solution.

Women and girls will never be fully engaged until men and boys are engaged. The Male Champions of Change program is definitely a step in the right direction but showing leadership in this area is not



**SNAIL'S PACE:** Despite years spent fighting for women in the workplace, inequity remains. The reasons behind this need acknowledging if we hope to move forward.

enough; it must be actioned by everyone in the workplace.

There is a need to engage men and women and find ways to make 'gender' visible to all.

The second reason for slow progress is that it is not widely acknowledged and accepted by society that we still live and work in patriarchal systems. We have centuries of beliefs and behaviours to overcome to change this situation. There has been some change in belief that has allowed progress: for example, the belief held only a century ago that women would become masculine in character and look if educated. Such beliefs are hard to change, because as humans we have needed to develop strong 'survival' biases (such as in-group bias, which causes us to associate with, and favour, people like us). In patriarchal workplaces men will favour men, and these systems perpetuate themselves to maintain the status quo.

As a woman working in this area, I found the third reason to be one of the easiest ones to understand but one of the hardest to work

on for myself. We are all impacted by gender stereotype norms and cultural beliefs. Thus, the third reason why change has been so slow is that women are just as likely to uphold similar stereotype beliefs about each gender as men are eg. think leader – think male, think nurturer – think female. This is even more complex as conscious beliefs can sometimes be overridden by unconscious beliefs. Stereotyping is deeply rooted, embedded from birth, and then reinforced throughout our lives both at home and at work. Stereotypes are often unconscious and thus hard to recognise which means they are rarely updated and are strengthened by our natural process of confirmation bias. So even when you consciously believe in women's equal position in society your unconscious responses can be the opposite. Our unconscious mind is strong and because it engages automatically and much quicker than our conscious mind it can lead to influences in our decision making that we are not aware of.

**Dr Gunilla Burrowes, principal at Gender Matters**

## COASTLINES

### BEACH WATCH

We don't normally have a big south swell for this time of year. Surf to remain big and wind swept as the low pressure system moves slowly to the east in the Tasman. Swell South at 4 to 5m. Winds Strong from the South to S/E and easing by the afternoon.

Surf to peak on the big mid morning high tide. All beaches out of control and very messy. Once again the harbour rights will be busy. Some protection up at Seal Rocks to the north.

A lot of sand moving with the strong sweeps to the north. Swimming to be off limits with patrolled beaches and ocean bathes to be closed. Water temps on 21C.

### HUNTER BOATING

**Winds** Southerly 15 to 25 knots, reaching up to 30 knots during the morning and early afternoon. Winds decreasing to 10 to 15 knots in the late evening. **Seas** 2 to 3 metres. **Swell** Southerly 4 to 5 metres. **Weather** Partly cloudy. 50% chance of showers in the morning and early afternoon. **Caution** Large and powerful surf conditions are expected to be hazardous for coastal activities such as crossing bars by boat and rock fishing.

### NEWCASTLE SHIPPING

#### Arrivals

**Yesterday:** No record.

**Today:** David Allan, 8am; Taipower Prosperity, 1.45pm; Century Wave, 2.15pm; North Fortune, 3pm; Hebei Tangshan, 4pm; Pan Daisy, 4.30pm; Spirit of Ho-ping, 5pm; Kweilin, 6.15pm; PT Kythira, 9.45pm.

#### Departures

**Yesterday:** No record.

**Today:** Paolo Topic, 8am; Centurion, 8.15am; Tsukuba Maru, 9.15am; Mamitsa XI, 9.30am; Aal Shanghai, 11am; New Able, 11am; FPMC 23, 11am; Alpha Melody, 11.30am; Vipha Naree, 12.45pm.

### AIR QUALITY

**Wallsend Fair**  
**Newcastle Fair**  
**Beresfield Fair**  
**Muswellbrook Good**  
**Singleton Good**



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