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Call for measured action on NZTA regulatory role

It is clear that the Government needs to take action on the regulatory role of the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), says Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett.

“Documents released today by the [Ministry of Transport](#) make for sober reading when it comes to past performance of the regulator and its monitoring agency,” Leggett says.

“But it is not unique in government for the regulatory side of an agency to be in conflict with its other mandates. It is also not unique for career public servants to not be the right people to manage and oversee regulatory roles.

“The reports the Government released today note the tension between the regulatory role of the NZTA and its other imperatives of infrastructure and investment.

“Our view is that road safety is about more than just a strong regulatory approach, you need infrastructure and investment to ensure safe roads in the first place. The behaviour of drivers and professional operators is one thing, but if the infrastructure they are using is not safe, it is academic – accidents are going to happen.

“We would like to see a measured response to these reports that balances the roles of the NZTA. We don’t want to see a pendulum swing into over-regulation and more expense put on road users to pay for that over-regulation.

“The reports show there has not been the right regulatory experience at governance and senior leadership levels, which is not unexpected. We want to see empowerment of the staff who do have this experience to be able to use good judgement and decision-making. Governance should always sit above that operational level anyway.

“We also want to see a return to good data gathering to inform strategy and practice. The reports show there is a lack of data integrity and a good regulator needs good data. Evidence-based decision making from accurate and informative data is what we expect to see from government agencies.

“We agree in principle with the Government’s initial response to the recommendations to develop a new regulatory strategy and operating model; establish a Statutory Director of Land Transport; refresh the NZTA’s regulatory objectives, functions and powers; strengthen regulatory capability on the NZTA Board; and review regulator coordination and cohesiveness.

“However, we have some concerns about what the reality will be of the role of the Statutory Director of Land Transport and the Government’s proposal to spend \$45 million initially and recovering costs in future via the National Land Transport Fund.

“We don’t want all the eggs going into the regulatory basket. It is imperative there is equal weight given to infrastructure and investment. Additional costs on road users are not appropriate in the current economic environment. Business owners are struggling as it is.

“We also don’t want to see more compliance functions and costs, quite the opposite. If there can be some streamlining, for example on the implementation of the health and safety regulations, we would support that.

“There is still more detail we would like to see, particularly around the powers of the Statutory Director and costs and funding.

“We would like to acknowledge the work that has been done in the past year by NZTA to improve its regulatory functions, and the work that the Ministry of Transport has done to better monitor NZTA. We have been building good relationships with both agencies and know that there are some skilled operators who deserve recognition,” Leggett says.

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About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Associations NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 26,600 people (3.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports about 70% of New Zealand’s land-based freight measured on a tonne/kilometre basis.