



Troy,

Thanks for your email and I hope I can provide some answers to the two points you raised.

Firstly the matter of Legislative protection for pilots to cross the centre lane. As you maybe aware only Western Australian pilots have this protection at this time. In the past the Association has held discussions with both VicRoads and Queensland Transport on the subject of giving pilot vehicle operators some form of Legislative protection but this has meet with a flat refusal as it is their opinion that the duties of a pilot vehicle driver are clearly spelt out within **their** guidelines, that being a pilot vehicle is there to provide a “warning” to oncoming vehicles of the oversize load only.

With Western Australia pilots, although they have Traffic Warden status there is always an overriding factor that they may only cross the centre line ‘if safe to do so’ although they do have Legislative protection to cross, if there is a incident then it would be deemed that their action in crossing the centre line ‘was not safe’. Consequences of that would be extremely costly as it could be claimed that the incident was a direct result of the pilot vehicle being on the incorrect side of the centre line then the costs of damage to all vehicles’ would fall on the pilot vehicle driver and his insurance if he had public liability cover.

How many pilot operators have \$10 Million Public Liability cover – I would suggest not that many.

So I pose the question do you want the extra liability that comes with that limited power?

In relation to the red light camera issue, all pilot vehicle drivers have the option to submit in writing a request for review of any infringement notice that they are issued with should they be photographed going through a red light. Of those that I have personal knowledge of they have all had the notice withdrawn after they explained the circumstance around why they travelled through a red light. I draw your attention to the fact that even police and other emergency vehicles are not exempt from this provision of the law.

As for setting fair rates I need to point out that the majority of pilot vehicle drivers are in fact self employed small business operators and as such have the right to set what they feel is a fair price for their services. The ACCC have a very strict policy on what could be seen as price fixing, as you may be aware.

Notwithstanding that the Association has over the past years published an example of what the then current rates were in all capital cities and it is feasible we could undertake that exercise again in the New Year.

Some years ago the Association provided members with a spreadsheet calculator which would allow members to work out the actual breakeven price they needed to charge. This is still available to members today upon request.

Further, not that many years ago a group of pilot operators joined the TWU and requested that that organisation develop rates for the industry only to find that the rates provided by the TWU were lower than those being charged at that time.

Now let's look at the example you provided in relation to the charges for the police escort.

I take it from the figures you quoted you are using the current Queensland Police Service charges as the basis for your argument.

You state that *a police officer is on \$105.70 p/h plus \$0.79 per km for the vehicle for every km travelled including return to base.*

In fact the Police Service charge this amount and the actual officer undertaking the escort is paid at double normal hourly rate worked while escorting and returning to their station plus any overnight allowances they are entitled to, that is not the amounts you quoted. The balance of the fees charged are retained by the region that issued the permit to travel.

I agree with you that *'we cannot as an industry sit back and not fight for a fair rate'* but let's look at our industry.

The pilot vehicle industry is in my opinion the most dysfunctional I have ever been involved with. The NPVDA has been in operation for close to 20 years and each year we battle to get members prepared to step up and take on roles within the committee.

The Association continues to meet with various State authorities and the National Transport Commission on a regular basis trying to get a uniform approach throughout Australia for Pilot Vehicle Operations as well as a general awareness campaign for the motoring public. All to no avail. I think we need to ask ourselves why the Association is not succeeding.

How can we as an industry be expected to be seen as a united voice when there are small groups of pilot operators setting up in various states, making approaches to the various State authorities claiming they represent the industry, yet they have never approached the Association to see what we have done to date. All of which is undermining any approaches the Association makes.

As the one of the Associations representative to various State Transport Authorities I find it difficult to respond to questions like – do you know these people who are stating they represent the industry and are seeking meetings with the Minister of Transport claiming to have a mandate to demand change to this or that?

As for a fragmented industry – I agree we are just that and always will be until the industry wakes up to its self – but I fear that will never happen as there will always be those out there that think they have the answer to the industry problems and start approaching the Authorities seeking change. Importantly let's not forget those who will approach transport companies offering them a discount rate to do the work – thereby undercutting other operators. Then there is the transport companies who know our industry is fragmented and delight in forcing pilot operators to reduce the rate if they want to keep their work.

If we are ever going to change the industry we need as you have rightly stated '*need to be a National Voice*' and if you can suggest how this can be achieved I would welcome your input both as a member of the Association and on the National Committee as I feel you have a good understanding of what is needed.

I hope I have clarified your concerns in some small way and look forward to you and your colleagues joining the National Pilot Vehicle Drivers Association.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Davey', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jim Davey
Secretary