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MEDIA RELEASE

Platform Providers Set to Exert Even More Influence on Australian Freight Markets, Conference Delegates Told

Attendees at the inaugural Australian Road Transport Industrial Organisation NSW Branch Annual Conference and Dinner were warned that platform providers such as Amazon and Uber Freight threaten further significant disruption in road freight markets, according to ARTIO NSW Secretary/Treasurer, Hugh McMaster.

Both the newly appointed NSW Shadow Minister for the Gig Economy, Daniel Mookhey, and TWU National Secretary, Michael Kaine, raised a range of concerns about the current and emerging role of these providers in the industry.

Mr Mookhey, in his first speech since his appointment to the NSW Shadow Ministry earlier this month, said these platform providers see transport as “ground zero”. He called for a “level playing field” and “competitive neutrality” to reduce their dominance in the markets in which they operate. He also called for urgent reform to arrangements related to the engagement of gig workers to ensure they were adequately protected under the law.

Mr Kaine said “a tsunami is coming” as Amazon and Uber expand their reach into the global freight market. He said that Amazon and Uber Freight are already established in the US and, only last week, Uber Freight announced it is setting up operations in the European Union. Mr Kaine said these platform providers are prepared to loss lead in order to gain a foothold in freight markets.

Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety, Glenn Sterle, stressed the importance of industry engagement to address the industry’s long established and emerging challenges.

Mr McMaster said these three presenters, together, outlined the challenges facing employers, contractors and employees in the industry.

“In our rapidly changing world, these large multinational companies are setting out to further disrupt established commercial and operational arrangements in the industry.

“These companies are further raising consumer expectations that the goods they order will arrive almost instantaneously.

“They expect an already stretched industry to meet those expectations.

“It is 40 years since Razorback and, in that time, industry has not shown the will to do the necessary work to develop an enduring policy framework which addresses it’s economic challenges.

“We need to ensure all road freight businesses have a level of regulatory support which ensures failures in the operation of Australian freight markets are addressed so that well-run business can aspire to

making a reasonable return over the medium to long run while at the same time allowing for poorly run businesses to fail.

“Perhaps with Amazon and Uber Freight rapidly expanding their global tentacles, and threatening more widespread and more significant disruption on the operation of freight markets, industry leaders will realise the increasingly important need to work together in anticipation of their arrival,” Mr McMaster said.

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