



**The Parliament of the
Commonwealth of Australia**

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee on
Communications, Transport
and the Arts**

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Deputy Chair

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Media Release

Public hearings

Melbourne

**Dead Tired: the fight against
fatigue**

Managing fatigue in transport inquiry

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts will continue its extensive inquiry into managing fatigue in transport in **Melbourne on Friday 8 October 1999**.

Mr Paul Neville MP, Chair of the committee, **said**:

'The committee has been thorough in its efforts to gather evidence from as many sources as possible. We have spoken to individual 'truckies' right through to large companies. The committee has had the benefit of receiving significant evidence from leading Australian and international experts.

Fatigue has emerged as a critical issue for all modes of transport—air, sea, road and rail. It will take the combined efforts and cooperation of government, business, the community and individuals to tackle this complex problem.

Australia is one of the world leaders in the fight against workplace fatigue. In this country we have the people and the expertise to effectively and comprehensively manage fatigue. What is needed is the willingness to attack the problem head on.

The National Road Transport Commission will give evidence on the development and phased introduction of innovative national heavy vehicle driving regulations, which have been taken up by a number of states. This has required a high degree of government and business cooperation. We will discuss these new regulations, their effectiveness and how they could address the problem of fatigue.

Air safety and fatigue issues will be discussed with Ansett and the Civil Air Operations Officer's Association. Of particular concern is fatigue amongst aircraft maintenance and cabin crews, and air traffic control personnel. I am surprised to learn that the duty hours of cabin crew and maintenance staff are not regulated to the extent of pilots who have strict duty hour limitations.

Further, **Mr Neville said**

'The effectiveness of the Transport Accident Commission's driver fatigue education campaigns will be examined by the committee. A key issue that has been highlighted in this inquiry is the need for effective and comprehensive workplace and community education on fatigue.

Another broad issue is that of sleep apnoea, a medical condition which disrupts sleep. Studies in the US suggest that drivers with sleep apnoea are three to four times more likely to have an accident than those without sleep apnoea. The committee will take evidence from Sleep Disorders Australia on ways to raise awareness of this problem, and identify and treat people with this condition.

We also will be discussing a range of fatigue issues with the Transport Workers Union and the Australia Council of Trade Unions. The union movement has an important role to play and has already demonstrated its willingness to participate in many fatigue initiatives.

We have a long way to go before we can safely say we have workplace fatigue under control. There are no simple solutions. Ultimately the whole community, including individuals, companies and government, is responsible for managing fatigue in transport and the general workplace. A major shift in attitude, similar to that which has been achieved with speed and drink driving, is needed to successfully combat the serious problem of managing fatigue in transport.'

The public hearing will be held at:

Legislative Council Committee Room

Floor 2, Parliament House

Spring Street

From 0845 to 1630 hours

The terms of reference for the inquiry are listed below.

All members of the public are welcome as observers to the public hearing.

The public hearing program is attached. Background information is available on request.

Terms of Reference

In relation to managing fatigue in transport, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts is to inquire into, and report on, the following.

- Causes of, and contributing factors to, fatigue.
- Consequences of fatigue in air, sea, road and rail transport.
- Initiatives in transport addressing the causes and effects of fatigue.
- Ways of achieving greater responsibility by individuals, companies, and governments to reduce the problems related to fatigue in transport.

For further information

Media comment	Paul Neville MP, committee chair	07 4152 0744 02 6277 4940
Background	Adam Cunningham, inquiry secretary	02 6277 4597 on the day 0413 021 420
Web site	http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/cta/index.htm	