

Weather

Today: a little drizzle then a shower or two, 18
Tomorrow: shower or two

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Truck operators move to allay fears

BY BILL MELDRUM

THE Victorian Freight and Logistics Council appears to have leaked further details of the yet to be released Green Triangle Freight Action Plan by reacting to what it claims is a fear campaign being pushed on a modified B-double or high productivity freight vehicles (HPFVs) trial for the region.

The trial is expected to start next year, but late last week the Member for South West Coast Denis Naphthine said motorists in the south-west would be shocked to learn the government had unleashed a "monster truck experiment in our region".

Dr Naphthine said the trial, as partly outlined in the State Government's

\$38 billion transport plan last week, had "two large trailers each capable of carrying a 40-foot container."

He said they were at least seven to 10 metres longer than the current 26-metre-long B-double trucks, and not the four metres extra length mentioned in the government plan.

Dr Naphthine based his opposition to the trial on the poor condition of the region's roads.

"If the local highways and arterial roads were up to scratch, I would not be opposing the trial," he said.

He reaffirmed his comments the extra long trucks should only be allowed on duplicated highways.

"Our local highways and arterial roads have few, if any, passing lanes,

poor shoulders, numerous potholes, ruts, undulation and often dangerous alignments," he said.

However, the council's chief executive officer Rose Elphick on Friday flatly denied the HPFV trial would involve the 30-metre modified B-doubles referred to in the State Government's transport plan, and definitely not the monster trucks as referred to by Dr Naphthine.

She said the council had had direct input into the Green Triangle Freight Action Plan.

Ms Elphick said the next generation HPFVs proposed to be used in the Green Triangle trial included:

- For normal road access — a quad semi-trailer, 19 metres long with a

payload of 30 tonnes; and semi-trailers with new steering wheel technology, 19 metres long with a payload of 30 tonnes.

- For designated B-double routes — a prime-mover and trailer with new steering wheel technology, 26 metres long, with a payload of 52 tonnes; a quad B-double configuration, 27 metres long with a payload of 52 tonnes; and a prime-mover with trailer, new steering wheel technology, 26 metres long with a payload of 60 tonnes.

"It is unfair that people are encouraged to fear these vehicles, which are safer and perform better on road than many existing vehicles," she said.

The fear campaign was also criticised by Noske Group operations executive

director Tony Noske.

He said the group had spent more than \$100,000 in the research and development of HPFV concepts in the past 15 months.

"The use of these vehicles will reduce the number of vehicle movements on the route into the Port of Portland by 17.5 per cent over a standard B-double and by 50 per cent in comparison to the traditional semi-trailer type vehicle," he said.

"Our vehicle concept has been extensively tested under the National Transport Commission's performance based standards system and will feature some of the very best safety technology currently available anywhere in the world."

Where's summer gone?

McLeod