

MTAA RESPONSE TO:

ANCAP Consultation Paper: Delivering Safer Heavy Goods Vehicles for Australia and New Zealand

November 2026

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MOTOR TRADES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Executive summary

The Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) is the peak national body representing the automotive retail, service, repair and recycling industries. MTAA's membership includes state and territory motor trades associations whose members encompass new vehicle dealers (including truck dealers), independent repairers, body repairers, parts suppliers and other automotive businesses.

MTAA supports the development of an Australasian heavy goods vehicle safety rating scheme. Independent safety information has the potential to reduce road trauma and improve purchasing decisions across the heavy vehicle market.

MTAA's response reflects its perspective as an industry body for the sector that sells, services and repairs these vehicles. Our key points are:

- The program must be designed for Australian conditions, not simply imported from Europe.
- Bonneted trucks, which make up roughly a quarter of the Australian heavy-duty market, need to be covered from the start.
- The star rating system is well understood and should be used.
- The program should complement existing Australian Design Rules, not duplicate them.
- Ongoing serviceability of safety technologies matters as much as fitment at point of sale.

Response to Key Questions

The Australian market (Questions 1-6)

The Australian heavy vehicle market differs from Europe in ways that matter for program design:

- Cab design: Approximately 26 per cent of new heavy-duty trucks sold in Australia are bonneted (conventional cab), compared with a predominantly cab-over market in Europe. Bonneted trucks from Kenworth, Mack and Western Star are well established in long-haul and heavy-haulage work.
- Vehicle size and combinations: Australia operates B-doubles (up to 26 metres), road trains (up to 53.5 metres) and a range of multi-trailer configurations that are significantly larger than European standards. Assessment protocols designed around European single-trailer operations will need to account for this.
- Manufacturer mix: The Australian market draws from North America (Kenworth, Mack, Western Star), Europe (Volvo, Scania, Mercedes-Benz, DAF, MAN, IVECO), Japan (Isuzu, Hino, Fuso, UD) and China (BYD) among others. Japanese brands are particularly prominent in lighter heavy vehicle segments. Many of these are not covered by Euro NCAP.

- Fleet age: The average heavy rigid truck on Australian roads is over 16 years old. Safety rating benefits for new vehicles will take considerable time to flow through the fleet.
- Buyer profile: The market includes large corporate fleets with structured procurement processes alongside a significant number of owner-drivers and small operators who are more cost-sensitive. Both groups need clear, practical safety information.

ANCAP should initially focus on heavy-duty trucks (prime movers and heavy rigids above 12 tonnes GVM) used in long-haul, metropolitan distribution and construction, as these are involved in the most severe crash outcomes and represent the greatest diversity of Australian-specific configurations.

ANCAP should include prime movers and rigid trucks across heavy-, medium- and light-duty segments in the initial program scope. This would provide useful safety information for buyers across long-haul, metropolitan distribution and construction applications, while reflecting the diversity of the Australian truck market. If a staged rollout is necessary, ANCAP should establish a clear timetable for coverage across these segments, including bonneted trucks and Japanese-origin models.

On insurance incentives (Question 3), there is currently no systematic link between heavy vehicle safety ratings and insurance premiums equivalent to what exists in the light vehicle market. Some specialist insurers offer benefits for specific technologies such as driver-monitoring systems, but there is no published premium schedule tied to safety ratings. An ANCAP rating could provide the independent benchmark needed to develop such incentives.

On truck models for comparison (Question 6), several European brands tested by Euro NCAP are sold in Australia, but Australian specifications often differ in axle configurations, cab options and safety equipment levels. Euro NCAP results should not be assumed to apply to Australian vehicles without verification. Importantly, the bonneted trucks and Japanese-origin models that together represent a large share of the Australian market have no Euro NCAP coverage.

Crash experience and safety technologies (Questions 7-11)

MTAA notes the ANCAP consultation paper's comparative data showing that Australian urban truck crashes involve a higher proportion of car occupants and a lower proportion of pedestrians and cyclists than the European data that informed Euro NCAP's protocols. ANCAP should ensure its assessment weighting reflects Australian crash patterns, drawing on domestic crash data.

All the safety technologies assessed by Euro NCAP are relevant to Australia. In MTAA's view, the most important for Australian conditions are:

- AEB systems (addressing rear-end crashes on highways and in urban areas)
- Lane support and driver monitoring (addressing fatigue and inattention in long-distance operations)
- Direct and indirect vision (addressing vulnerable road user interactions in urban environments)

On ADAS fitment (Question 9), Australian mandates for AEB, ESC and lane departure warning have now commenced for new heavy vehicles, which will progressively close the gap with Europe for regulated technologies. The value of an ANCAP program is in assessing performance above the regulatory floor and in covering technologies not yet mandated.

On bonneted trucks (Question 10), direct and indirect vision assessments designed for cab-over trucks will require adaptation. MTAA recommends that ANCAP develop bonneted-specific protocols from the outset rather than leaving a quarter of the market unrated.

On specification differences (Question 11), MTAA members observe that Australian trucks from European manufacturers can differ in axle arrangements, suspension, cooling, chassis configuration and safety equipment fitment. ANCAP should verify equivalence before accepting Euro NCAP results for Australian vehicles.

New Zealand (Questions 12-15)

MTAA defers to New Zealand industry bodies on market-specific design considerations. A program covering both markets would benefit from economies of scale while maintaining flexibility for genuine differences.

Rating approach (Questions 16-18)

MTAA supports the use of star ratings (0-5 stars) for heavy vehicles, consistent with the light vehicle approach. The star system is well understood by buyers, fleet managers and policymakers. If practical or cost constraints prevent full crash testing initially, ANCAP's medallion-based ADAS grading (as used for commercial vans) could serve as an interim approach, with a pathway to full star ratings over time.

A specific label recognising performance in protecting vulnerable road users would have value for trucks operating in metropolitan distribution and for local government fleet purchasing.

Servicing and repair

MTAA draws ANCAP's attention to the importance of in-service maintenance of safety technologies. The value of a safety rating at point of sale is diminished if ADAS systems cannot be properly maintained, calibrated and repaired throughout the vehicle's life. MTAA members need access to technical information, calibration procedures, diagnostic tools and training to support these systems. MTAA encourages ANCAP to consider lifecycle serviceability in its program design.

Conclusion

MTAA supports this initiative and encourages ANCAP to design the program for Australian conditions from the outset, with particular attention to bonneted trucks, the diversity of the Australian truck market, and the practical needs of the businesses that sell, service and maintain these vehicles.

MTAA welcomes ongoing engagement with ANCAP and is available to assist with industry. Should you wish to discuss this submission please get in touch via info@mtaa.com.au.

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