



The crosses truckies bear

Truck drivers under constant pressure to meet deadlines

By **GEMIMA HARVEY**

A CHAIN of crosses lined the Pacific Highway at Coffs Harbour yesterday, representing the 287 deaths related to heavy vehicle accidents on Australian roads during the past 12 months.

The Transport Workers Union is running a 'Safe Rate' campaign to make the public aware of issues facing truck drivers and the knock-on effects for road safety.

North Coast, sub-branch secretary, Mick Forbes, said truck drivers are not paid for hours lost at distribution centres and are under pressure to make up time to meet deadlines.

"At major distribution centres, truck drivers spend an average of 20 hours a week waiting for the truck to be loaded and they are not

paid for this time," Mr Forbes said.

"With additional pressure of fluctuating petrol costs, heavy-vehicle drivers are pushed to have longer hours and skip rest breaks and scheduled maintenance.

"Legislation needs to address this."

The Transport Workers Union calls for sustainable rates which include pay for hours waited and consideration of fuel costs.

Mr Forbes said large retailers offer contracts to transport companies not practising these measures and believes a standard rates system needs to be implemented.

A report by Safe Work Australia said working in the road freight industry means you are 13 times more likely to be killed than other

employees.

Mr Forbes said truck drivers spend more time behind the wheel than office workers spend behind desks and yet deaths are recognised as a road toll rather than workplace statistic.

"If this number of deaths occurred in any other industry there would be a national inquiry," Mr Forbes said.

"We need something done quickly to fix this problem, it is not fair, not reasonable and not safe."

Former truck driver, Bill Patterson said he spent hours waiting in cues at distribution centres.

"You are already under pressure to meet deadlines and you only get paid while the wheels are turning."



IN MEMORY: 287 crosses mark the number of trucking deaths this year.

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PROTEST: North Coast sub-branch secretary Mick Forbes laying the crosses along the highway. *PHOTO: TREVOR VEALE*



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