



Truckies gear up for reforms

By **Kylie Stevens**

THE long journey towards a trucking industry overhaul is back on the road.

Transport Workers Union officials have made recent inroads in their campaign for nationwide regulation regarding minimum pay rates and safety standards for drivers.

TWU assistant state secretary Bruce Penton and truck drivers met Lindsay MP David Bradbury last week to discuss their concerns and handed over its Safe Rates report.

The report was the result of a recent summit in Sydney at which transport operators demanded major changes the industry.

Matters identified for inclusion under proposed regulation include minimum wages, cost recovery, waiting times, fuel costs and laws to prevent drivers

forced to take extra loads.

Mr Penton said about 281 people were killed in the industry each year.

A National Transport Commission report released last year showed that excessive client power and poor pay and conditions for truck drivers were a major cause of deaths and injuries.

"A survey of drivers from major distribution centres showed they each spend on average 24 hours a week sitting in queues unpaid," Mr Penton said.

He said the companies had to accept responsibility for what happens to the drivers when they had to make up time on the road.

Malcolm Neely of Oxley Park represents many drivers and transport workers living and working in western Sydney.

Linfox – Mr Neely's present employer – is respected in the trucking industry for pay and safety rates, unlike several other companies he has worked for in the past 10 years.

"There are companies out there which pay cheap rates while pushing their drivers to drive faster and carry extra loads," Mr Neely said. "This is dangerous. Companies doing the wrong thing need to be pulled up. We drive trucks which weigh up to 60 tonnes and can't afford to make a mistake on the road."

Mr Bradbury said he would present the report to Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard. He said he had already written to Ms Gillard on this and would make further representations.

The Federal Government has set up a working party to discuss regulations to the industry.



Working for a fair go: Lindsay MP David Bradbury (left) welcomed the safe rates report from the Transport Workers Union in St Marys on Friday. "This additional information will assist the Federal Government," he said.

Picture: Gary Warrick