

BIC Column March 2012

It's lucky we have had some rain in Canberra, it doesn't look like it will ever stop; we need it to wash away all the mud that has been slung by our Parliamentarians in and around Capital Hill in the past few days.

The dynamics of the leadership struggle in the ALP Government over the past few months and the eventual leadership spill in the last week of February don't need too much analysis; needless to say the "Kevolution" was quickly put down by the Prime Minister and her supporters.

It was apparent from the start of the formal leadership contest, although an unofficial one has been running in the media for months now; the ALP Caucus was going to keep the Prime Minister Gillard in the lodge.

Votes were decided for reasons of factional discipline, personal dislike of Kevin Rudd or fear of an election being called if there was a change of leaders.

Although Kevin Rudd's attempt to mobilise the general public to lobby their local Members and sweep in to the Lodge on a wave of popular support was clever, it was doomed to fail. That's not how representative democracy works in Australia and everybody in Canberra knew it, including Mr Rudd.

The main positive to come out of this whole mess is the Prime Minister's win was so decisive that any lingering doubt about who should lead the Government has been put to bed for the time being. A quick scan of the media coverage in the days following the vote suggests this is the case.

It is time now for the Government to get on with the program of vital reforms and investment it has been undertaking.

We anticipate Minister Albanese will keep his job as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, given his offer to resign as the Leader of the House in Parliament was rejected by the PM, even though he declared his support for Rudd.

Minister Albanese has undertaken some important and commendable reforms in his time at the helm, including the development of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), within which the BIC has a Bus Industry Taskforce, which I outlined in last month's column.

The BIC recently wrote to the NHVR implementation board in relation to the development of a National Heavy Vehicle Law to outline some key issues the bus industry faces within this regulatory framework.

We outlined our view that a "one size fits all" approach has been developed which lumps buses and trucks together as "heavy vehicles", not recognising the operational and aspirational differences of the two industries. It is a disservice to our industry and to the trucking industry,

The key issues we identified included:

- Fatigue and driving hours
- Performance Based Standards and network access

- Industry accreditation
- Licensing and driver authority
- Vehicle mass and loading
- Chain of responsibility
- Data capture and analysis
- Transfer of registration
- Local productivity initiatives

There are a lot of issues to work through in the development of this law and the BIC is calling for the each of the jurisdictions to dedicate specific resources to the bus and coach aspect of the law and feed into the Bus Industry Taskforce process.

The NHVR and National Laws that affect our industry and your business will feature as part of the 2012 BIC National Conference in Canberra to take our message to the seat of power in Federal Government.

We are so serious about this that the Monday night dinner of the conference will actually be in the Great Hall of Parliament House!

This year's Conference is a real chance to send the message as an industry to Federal Government that as an industry we want action and the theme for the Conference is ***Moving People: Action Now.***

The Conference will run from Sunday 28 to Wednesday 31 October, registrations will open in July.

Mark your diaries.