



Safe Work and Return to Work Awards 2019

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Safe Work and Return to Work Awards example entry Category one – Best solution to an identified health and safety issue

1. Describe the work health and safety issue and how it was identified.

Transporting cattle from one point to another is often impacted by road access for multiple combination vehicles. In these cases the truck/trailer configuration must change in order to complete the journey. As a result cattle are transferred mid-journey and often in locations where saleyards are not available to safely unload and reload the cattle. As a result drivers have to 'cross-load' on the roadside or in rest areas.

Historically this was done by reversing two trucks together and the drivers climbing up the side of the cattle crate, standing on top of the crate and often inside the crate to urge/move the cattle from one trailer to the next. This task exposed drivers to a situation where the chances of falling from heights or coming into contact with livestock were high.

This task was further impacted by the fact it was often carried out at night, in limited or no light and often when drivers were fatigued from driving.

The issue of drivers working at heights has long been a key safety concern for our workforce (we have previously engineered a unique safety ladder which is now attached to all new trailers) but this issue was further highlighted when WHSQ announced the 'Preventing workers from falling from heights' safety campaign.

A large amount of cross-loading occurs at Mitchell, as this is where the multiple trailer restrictions come into effect for type one and two road trains. It was reported that in a six month period, six drivers were hospitalised in Mitchell due to injuries sustained while cross loading.

Frasers livestock Transport has always supported a safe working culture and actively encourages staff to report and minimise risks and hazards within their working environment. Via this process and using the experience and knowledge of our drivers and logistics staff, 'cross-loading' was identified as a major safety issue.

The task involved working at heights; in a confined space (within the crate); with unpredictable and large livestock; quickly in areas with multiple tripping hazards; on top of the trailer exposed to wind/rain/elements.

As a result, cross loading not only put drivers at risk of injury from fall or livestock, but as the nature of the work requires drivers to work quickly, it also creates a high risk of tripping. All of these risks then result in an increased level of fatigue.

From an administrative point of view, 'cross-loading' was not time efficient and often resulted in drivers working longer hours than necessary which in turn increased fatigue and issues for drivers trying to complete journeys within the guidelines of their logbooks.

2. Explain in detail the solution that was developed to address this issue.

Our first aim in treating the issue was to minimise the 'manual labour' element of the cross loading process. Feedback and research identified three major hazards that needed to be eliminated: (a) the driver needed to be removed from working within the crate (a confined space which exposed the driver to live animals); (b) the driver needed to be removed from climbing the side of the crate or standing on top of the crate, and; (c) working in limited light.

The solution required the use of engineering controls via the design and build of a module which would create a safe and elevated working environment, addressing the issue of drivers coming into contact with livestock and incorporating lighting for night use.

Apart from engineering controls, it was also important to investigate administrative controls/improvements. Whilst lighting was identified in Award Nomination the development process, by changing the way work is organised we are now limiting the amount of cross-loading that occurs after dark.

The cross loading module is a free-standing steel unit, on concrete footings. The module includes several elevated and over-trailer platforms to allow drivers to work securely alongside or above the cattle crate to coax/move cattle from one trailer to the next. The module also includes a series of sliding gates which create a protective barrier between the driver and livestock.

Developing the solution involved: drivers; driver trainer; OH&S Manager; Fleet Manager; Logistics Manager; Engineer/boiler makers.

The above participants were engaged at different stages of the identification and development of the cross-loading module. For example drivers were involved in the identification stage to establish the requirements of the module, then later in the process drivers were again involved to trial the module.

The development of the solution was led by our Fleet Manager and the head of the engineering team. The OH&S Manager was involved across the entirety of the development, as was the driver trainer.

During the development, the team came across a barrier in relation to lighting. Cross-loading often occurs in remote areas which caused issue for incorporating lighting into the solution (no access to electricity). This barrier was overcome by the incorporating solar panels into the design of the module.

3. Outline and provide evidence of how successful the solution was and how it improved work health and safety.

Frasers' drivers, driver trainer, OH&S Manager; Fleet Manager; Logistics Manager and engineer/boiler makers were involved in developing and trialling the module and consulted on an ongoing basis to monitor its effectiveness.

The first cross-loading module is now in place and has been a resounding success for our business, both in terms of staff safety and productivity. The module has helped lift morale and productivity, and has re-enforced Frasers' commitment to safety.

Staff and management have been quick to adopt the 'cross-loading' module. Not only has the module created a safe working environment for drivers, but it also created time efficiencies which were seen as a major achievement by management and logistics staff.

In just six months the module has created strong interest in the cattle transport and grazing industry in Queensland. As a result Frasers' has been approached by several livestock transport businesses and the Queensland Department of Main Roads to build cross-loading modules for their own use.

The cross loading module is a completely new and unique solution to the issue of cross loading cattle. No similar solution is available.