



## What's so special about driving instructors?

Here's what driver trainers themselves think:

The impact of quality heavy vehicle driver training can lead to new careers for hopeful jobseekers, increased workforce capacity for industry, safer drivers, safer roads, and a more productive trucking community overall. Win, win, win.. Good truck trainers play a significant role (a largely silent and supportive role), in Australia's fast-moving transport sector. But a good trainer is hard to find.

So I spent a couple of weeks doing a ring-around. I asked a bunch of high-profile heavy vehicle driver trainers around the country what they thought was so special about being a heavy vehicle driving instructor?

Their responses were fairly consistent. They all agreed that an effective driver trainer requires a unique set of specific skills associated with teaching people how to operate large vehicles safely and confidently in Australia's most dangerous workplace.

Most agreed that to be successful, a heavy vehicle driving instructor requires a blend of technical knowledge, industry experience, teaching ability, an appreciation of the dangerous nature of the job, a commitment to safety and a certain level of empathy for fellow humans.

In addition to those qualities, it became apparent that it's handy to have a good grasp on the principles of effective communication, an understanding of the cultural sensitivities specific to the job and a great deal of patience plus emotional stamina. And don't forget a level of computer skills and motivation to study, to the level of a tertiary academic. See what I mean?

What did the Inter-web have to say:

I asked ChatGPT what was so special about HV driver trainers, and I got a slightly different perspective: "*Being a heavy vehicle driver trainer is a specialised and highly responsible role for several reasons.*" A summary of the main points from a 1,200-word response below:

1. **Safety and Responsibility:** Heavy vehicles require advanced driving skills. Training drivers to operate safely is critical and mistakes can lead to significant damage.
2. **Regulation and Compliance:** Heavy vehicle driver trainers must help drivers understand complex regulations including fatigue, load restraint, and mass limits.
3. **Technical Knowledge:** Trainers need an in-depth understanding of the mechanics and operation of many different types of vehicles and trailers. They must be able to teach drivers how to handle emergency situations, mechanical failures and reversing.
4. **Risk Management:** Trainers are responsible for teaching inexperienced drivers how to manage the risk of handling large, heavy, and potentially dangerous vehicles.
5. **Customised Training:** Trainers are required to tailor their instruction to the type of vehicle their students will operate, and to the type of student they are teaching. They need to adjust training methods based on specific needs of the student and the job.

6. **Contribution to Economy and Infrastructure:** Truck drivers are essential for transporting goods and people, and supporting construction, manufacturing, and public transport sectors. Trainers contribute directly to the smooth functioning of these sectors by ensuring that drivers are well-prepared for the challenges of the job.
7. **High Demand and Job Stability:** Due to the importance of logistics in global economies, the demand for qualified heavy vehicle drivers and trainers is often high.
8. **Fuel Efficiency and Environmental Impact:** Trainers often focus on teaching techniques to improve fuel efficiency and efficient driving techniques which reduces consumption, lowers emissions, contributes to cost savings for companies.
9. **Adapting to Advanced Technologies:** Teaching advanced technologies such as telematics, collision avoidance, and electronic logbook systems. Heavy vehicle driver trainers need to keep up with ever-changing technological changes.
10. **Emergency Response and Hazardous Situations:** Training drivers to deal with situations such as brake failures, tire blowouts, or severe weather conditions.
11. **Professional Development and Career Advancement:** Trainers play a key role in the professional development of drivers. They provide certifications and advanced training that can lead to better job opportunities, and career advancement.
12. **Building a Positive Industry Reputation:** Effective training leads to safer, more competent drivers, which enhances the reputation of the transportation industry overall. By producing skilled drivers who adhere to high safety and operational standards, professional trainers help build public trust and confidence in the industry.

*“In essence, being a heavy vehicle driver trainer requires a blend of advanced driving skills, technical knowledge, teaching ability, and a focus on safety. Their role impacts road safety, regulatory compliance, and the efficient functioning of transportation systems,” ChatGPT.*

Please consider:

I ask you, the reader, consider the tenet “*without trucks, Australia stops,*” and consider the fact that Australia’s road freight and public transport sectors are desperate for thousands of educated new entrants. And if we agree that there is a need to do something serious about reducing road deaths and serious road trauma, how are we going to identify and help motivate those special characters that make driver training so special?

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