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## Research review sparks truck driver health program

**To coincide with the upcoming launch of their new truck driver health program, the OzHelp Foundation (OzHelp) has published a review which draws on national and international research findings into the poor health outcomes of heavy vehicle drivers.**

OzHelp has been funded through the Commonwealth Government's Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative (HVS), administered by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to develop a health and wellbeing program for owner driver truck drivers.

The program 'Health in Gear' will shortly commence its pilot phase and is informed by the findings of the review.

The review found the sedentary nature of the occupation combined with poor diet and a lack of exercise puts drivers at a higher risk of obesity and developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, mental-ill health, and cardiovascular health issues.

Truck drivers are subject to constant time pressures, long shifts, tight deadlines and isolation which can lead to depression, anxiety and sleeping disorders.

Nationally truck drivers represent the second highest occupational group, after construction workers, at risk of suicide.

On average, truck drivers work 49 hours per week compared to the average working week of Australians which was 32.3 hours in 2019. Long work hours have an adverse impact on social connection, which also impact on mental health outcomes.

OzHelp Chief Executive Officer, Mr Darren Black said the review was the first step in developing program for drivers.

"The constraints under which drivers operate have a direct bearing on drivers' physical health and wellbeing and there is a genuine desire from the driving community for things to change."

"Drivers are exceptionally resilient and have a special strength of character. Many have been incredibly open in sharing the challenges and contributing to the design of the upcoming program," said Mr Black.

NHVR Chief Executive Officer, Sal Petrocchio, said the health and wellbeing is critical to improved safety outcomes.

"The HVS provides funding to implementable, value-for-money projects that focus on improving road safety," Mr Petrocchio said.

"Life on the road can be very tough on the mental and physical health of drivers and focusing on what we can do to support better health outcomes is a key priority for the NHVR.

"Healthy drivers are safer drivers. Projects like this that address the specific health challenges faced by drivers are critical to improving the overall wellbeing of our industry."

[Download the review](#)

The review was drafted by Michelle Jones, and edited by Dr. Meg Perceval and Dr. Doris Kordes, OzHelp Foundation. Dr. Coralie Wilson from the University of Wollongong provided advice on the content and structure.

For more information about the literature review or the program, contact [healthingear@ozhelp.org.au](mailto:healthingear@ozhelp.org.au)

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