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**PRESS RELEASE – 27 MARCH 2018**

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**LIFE SAVING TECHNOLOGY HITS THE ROAD AS INNOVATIVE STUDY SEEKS TO REDUCE TRUCK CRASHES**

**Canberra, 27 March 2018:**

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Minister for Urban Infrastructure and Cities will launch a landmark study aimed at reducing heavy vehicle crashes in Australia and improving truck driver well-being today, featuring world-leading fatigue prevention and driver monitoring technology.

The A$6.5 million Advanced Safe Truck Concept, an Australian Government Cooperative Research Centre Project, aims to reduce fatal truck crashes by developing new vehicle technologies, achieved by studying driver behaviour and better understanding the impact of driver fatigue and distraction in particular. The partnership is headed by Canberra-based company Seeing Machines and includes Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) and Ron Finemore Transport Services.

Minister Fletcher said “On behalf of the Australian Government I am pleased to be launching this important study which aims to help make our roads safer for all users. I congratulate Seeing Machines and all the partners here today for their important work and I look forward to following the study’s progress.”

The study is the first of its kind in the world to be done linking in-cab driver monitoring technology with the external traffic and roadway in real-time. The Seeing Machines technology is fitted to a number of vehicles from the Ron Finemore Transport Services fleet.

The two-phase program builds on the Seeing Machines’ Guardian technology platform that actively monitors for and alerts drivers to fatigue and distraction.

Seeing Machines Executive Chairman, Ken Kroeger, said the innovative technology positioned the project as a world-leading road safety initiative.

“We are so proud to be at the forefront of road safety here in Australia and excited to see our driver monitoring technology delivering safety solutions across all transport sectors globally,”Mr Kroeger said.

“We have the opportunity to drive clever product design in revolutionary ways to enhance road safety“ said Seeing Machines‘ Chief Scientific Officer and project leader, Dr Michael Lenné.

“Furthermore, it’s very rewarding to see the Australian Government recognise both the technological innovation and the road safety impact of this project. It’s exciting to work with great partners on a project that will positively impact the heavy vehicle industry in Australia and around the world and consequently, the safety of all road users.”

Phase one of the project has seen the testing of truck drivers in MUARC’s Advanced Driving Simulator, the first time a truck simulator has been used for research in Australia. Drivers are tested in a rested and a fatigued state so a better understanding of fatigue on truck safety can be achieved.

MUARC Director, Professor Judith Charlton, said the research could make a profound impact in reducing fatalities in the freight industry.

“We pride ourselves on translating evidence-based research into real-world solutions and by working alongside our industry partners and with the support of the federal government, this project has the capacity to prevent injuries and save lives,” Prof Charlton said.

According to the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE), 2462 Australians were killed as a result of involvement in heavy vehicle crashes between 2005 and 2014. These fatalities represented 17.5% of deaths on Australian roads.

The trucking industry is a major part of the Australian economy. A 2016 report by National Transport Insurance stated the industry included over 500,000 registered trucks, 41,097 businesses and 259,508 employees.

Ron Finemore Transport, which employs more than 450 people and has over 200 prime movers, will fit its fleet of trucks with the same driver monitoring technology as part of the project’s Naturalistic Road Safety Study.

General Manager of Ron Finemore Transport Services, Darren Wood said that “By participating in this study we are helping to make Australian roads safer for not only our drivers but all users of our roads. At RFT we are committed to world’s best practice in driver and fleet safety. As end users, we have the opportunity to influence the technology so it best addresses the needs of the freight industry”.

Associate Professor Michael Fitzharris, head of MUARC’s Regulation and In-depth Crash Investigation Unit said, “The type of technology deployed here has the potential to be applied across all vehicles, potentially saving thousands of lives and preventing countless serious injuries. By working in partnership with key stakeholders, the program represents a profound opportunity to demonstrate the value of combining in-vehicle driver monitoring with what is happening on the road, in real-time. We would hope that this type of technology is fitted to all vehicles as standard equipment in the future.”

The full project is expected to be completed at the end of 2019.

Background:

**Seeing Machines**

Seeing Machines is an industry leader driver monitoring technology for multiple transport sectors globally, and delivers the next generation of fatigue prevention and driver monitoring technology for the commercial transport sector in Australia and around the world.

Their Guardian system uses advanced computer vision technology to detect and minimise driver fatigue and distraction events and associated accidents in commercial fleet applications. The system has demonstrated it can achieve over 90% reduction in fatigue and distraction related driver events based on studies of worldwide deployment experience.

**Monash University Accident Research Centre**

The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) is one of the world’s foremost comprehensive injury prevention research institutions. The Centre’s research is interdisciplinary, applying a systems-based framework across transport, workplace and community sectors. Stakeholder engagement and the delivery of relevant research with real-world solutions has been a key to MUARC’s success since its inception in 1987. The Centre’s research has helped keep the Victorian road fatality rate to one of the lowest in the world and has also contributed to a diverse range of workplace and community safety initiatives.

**Ron Finemore Fleet:**

Ron Finemore Transport is a regional based carrier specialising in transport of food and fuel products. Employing over 450 people and with over 200 prime movers in service, RFT travels over 50 million kilometres annually. RFT maintains a strong safety culture, supported by industry best practice compliance accreditations, a safe and modern fleet incorporating the latest safety technology and the use and installation of Seeing Machines across its entire fleet to minimise and reduce the risks associated with fatigue and distraction.

Media enquiries

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