There are more than 40,000 transport operators in Australia and the number of loading docks, back doors and delivery entrances they have to service is many times that.

When things go awry and drivers go to the wrong gate or miss their window on the loading dock, the efficiency of the national supply chain takes a hit, not to mention the freight forwarders and their customers.

Up to now, the responsibility for providing accurate information about where to make deliveries has rested with site operators – manufacturers, retailers, distributors to name a few – and their communications with their transport providers.

Each individual relationship has to generate and maintain accurate delivery information and, whenever there is a change in circumstances – new opening/trading hours, COVID-19 restrictions, safety constraints etc – each transport company servicing a particular site has to update individually.

All the information uploaded into the registry will be provided in a standard format so that it can be digitised and used to provide uniform information whenever a transport operator downloads site data before they plan to enter a location.

“We must find smarter ways of doing things and the NLR is one way to support the freight industry as we collectively move into a more digitised world,” Bonnie Ryan says.

The registry are mostly healthcare records because the healthcare industry has been using location data for many years to support supply chain processes other than transport, such as e-procurement. Those records have now been migrated to the National Location Registry platform where they can be leveraged to take advantage of the added functionality it provides in improved transport and freight-related data.

Healthcare facilities are often complex precincts to navigate if you are a truck driver and that can be passed down to the drivers so they can plan their day more thoroughly.”

The registry holds details about driver amenities at the various sites. Some of the biggest centres have dedicated amenity areas for drivers, offering toilets, food and coffee, shower facilities, even a gym.

“There’s no real information about exactly what facilities there are at those rest areas; for example, how many parking spaces, is there food, is it just an informal off-the-road kind of site, or is it a more substantial place to stop for a rest.”

Ryan says the creation of the NLR is part of a wider digitalisation of the freight sector.

“We just need to get everything flowing a lot smoother because the reality is freight volumes are expected to grow 75 per cent in the next two or three decades. COVID and the exponential increase in online shopping has stretched our transport networks. We must find smarter ways of doing things and the NLR is one way to support the freight industry as we collectively move into a more digitised world.”

Bonnie Ryan is director freight, logistics and industrial sectors at GS1 Australia, the supply chain standards organisation that will operate the National Location Registry.