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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO NATIONAL HEAVY VEHICLE ACCESS SCHEMES AND ARRANGEMENTS

This bulletin provides a broad overview of the range and structure of various heavy vehicle access schemes in operation throughout Australia, and steps for operator participation. Heavy vehicles can be broadly categorised in two ways:

- those qualifying for 'as of right', general access to the wider road network, and
- those that may gain restricted or conditional access to the road network (essentially, non-standard, longer and heavier vehicles).

General access

Vehicles qualifying for general access to the road network are those that comply with applicable vehicle standards and loaded to within General Mass Limits (GML). Examples of such vehicles are most heavy vehicles up to and including 42.5 tonne semi-trailers.

Relevant links:

- Australian Vehicle Standards Rules (AVSR) www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?ArealD=35&DocumentId=16
- Mass and loading national model regulations www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/all/search/EEDC2D6DC100BE D6CA25710300148A9D

The AVSR and Mass and Loading regulations provide a useful overview of national vehicle standards, mass and loading limits. However, implementation of some matters may vary between states and territories.

Restricted or conditional access

Larger and heavier vehicles may only be granted restricted access to the road network, with additional conditions imposed on them.

There are a significant number of heavy vehicle access schemes operating in the different Australian states and territories. The major, nationally agreed schemes are listed below.

Heavy vehicle access is regulated by individual state and territory road agencies. To participate in a scheme, applicants should contact road agencies in the states and territories in which they plan to operate.

However, to discuss participation in the Performance Based Standards scheme, contact the NTC. www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?documentid=1158

For heavy vehicles subject to restricted access, there are essentially two means of gaining approval and road network access:

- by complying with the conditions of a state or territory notice scheme; or
- by applying to a state or territory road agency for a permit.

The particular scheme of interest will determine which of those two means of access is applicable.

Specific vehicle types operating under notice

Most states and territories allow some specific types of heavy vehicles to operate under gazettal notice, in which a road network and operating conditions are specified. Notice schemes do not require participants to register or apply for a permit.

Examples of common heavy vehicle types often operating under notice include:

- B-doubles (including 26m B-double scheme);
- road trains;
- longer or heavier truck-trailers;
- long buses;
- heavy vehicles carrying livestock;
- heavy vehicles transporting hay;
- long refrigerated trailers; and
- special purpose vehicles including mobile cranes, agricultural equipment, load carrying vehicles (low loaders).



Figure 1: Road trains may operate under notice, mostly in regional areas of Australia.

Although some schemes are subject to nationally agreed policies, network access and additional requirements may be imposed by individual states and territories. More specific details are available on road agency websites.

Mass concession schemes

Heavy vehicles subject to General Mass Limits may be able to participate in a mass concession scheme. Major nationally agreed schemes are:

- Higher mass limits (HML)
www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?Areald=37&DocumentId=1806
- Concessional mass limits (CML)
www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?Areald=37&DocumentId=1428; and
- 6.5 tonne steer axle concession
www.ntc.gov.au/filemedia/Reports/PackageToAccelerateDeliveryOct06.pdf.

Table 1 (located at the end of the bulletin) shows an indicative comparison of mass concessions available between the different schemes (subject to varying state and territory laws, and conditions for each scheme, explained in more detail by following the links provided above).

Participation in these schemes requires registration with relevant state and territory road agencies, and includes operating conditions.

Many states and territories operate mass concession schemes to accommodate local circumstances, such as port area container and livestock transport.

States and territories also operate schemes to permit the transport of heavy, indivisible loads.



Figure 2: Mass concessions may be available, such as for container transport around port areas.

Over-dimensional transport

Over-dimensional transport refers to vehicles (including loads) that exceed 2.5m width and 4.3m height (4.6m for livestock vehicles).

Such vehicles may be required to fit warning signs and lights, and be accompanied by pilot or escort vehicles.

Over-dimensional transport is generally only permitted for the movement of large, indivisible items that cannot be broken down and transported within prescriptive dimensional limits.

Information on requirements for gaining accreditation as a pilot or escort vehicle driver in different states and territories is available from the NTC website. www.ntc.gov.au/filemedia/Reports/AdminGlinePilotEscortAccPOct2004.pdf For further information, contact relevant road agencies

The National Model Oversize and Overmass Vehicles Regulations are available for download from www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?documentid=1585 Please note state and territory regulations may differ from national model regulations.

Safer and more productive non-standard heavy vehicles

Some concessions to heavy vehicle (combination) dimensional and mass limits, not otherwise addressed by state and territory schemes, are available through participation in the national Performance Based Standards scheme. For more information visit: www.ntc.gov.au/viewpage.aspx?Areald=37&DocumentId=1158



Figure 3. Example of a SMART vehicle, with steerable rear axle, that may operate under the PBS scheme.

Potential applicants are advised to discuss their circumstances with the NTC and relevant state and territory road agencies, in order to determine whether participating in PBS, or another state or territory-based scheme, would best suit their needs.

State and territory road agencies

Useful information on the various heavy vehicle schemes and contact details are available on road agency websites, included below:

New South Wales

www.rta.nsw.gov.au/heavyvehicles/index.html

Victoria

www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/HeavyVehicles

Queensland

www.transport.qld.gov.au/Home/Industry/Freight_and_heavy_vehicles/Heavy_vehicles

Western Australia

www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/UsingRoads/HeavyVehicles/Pages/HeavyVehiclesHome.aspx

South Australia

www.transport.sa.gov.au/freight/road/vehicle_configuration/heavy_vehicle_access_framework/index.asp

Australian Capital Territory

www.tams.act.gov.au/move/vehicles/Heavy_Vehicles

Tasmania

www.transport.tas.gov.au

Northern Territory

www.nt.gov.au/transport

Table 1: Mass limits under different schemes

Mass limits, under different schemes				
	General Mass Limits (GML - default requirement)	Concessional mass limits (CML)	Higher mass limits (HML)	6.5 tonne steer axle concession
Axle type				
Steer axle	6.0	n/a	n/a	6.5
Tandem axle group (dual tyres)	16.5	17.0	17.0	n/a
Tri-axle group (dual tyres)	20.0	21.0	22.5	n/a
Gross combination mass limit				
Semi-trailer (6 axle)	42.5	43.5	45.5	n/a
B-double (9 axle)	62.5	64.5	68.0	n/a