What are pilot and escort vehicle drivers and when are they used?

When a vehicle carries an oversize load through traffic, safety of other road users is paramount. Pilot and escort vehicles accompany oversize vehicles on the road and ensure other road users are safe.

The holder of an escort vehicle driver accreditation is also authorised to perform traffic control.

Why is a national accreditation scheme being proposed for pilot and escort vehicle drivers?

Different states and territories currently have different training and accreditation requirements for pilot and escort vehicle drivers. There are currently no formal arrangements for mutual recognition of driver accreditation when loads are moved across state and territory borders.

These differing requirements create inefficiencies for transport operators moving oversize loads over borders and for pilot and escort drivers wishing to work in different areas of the country.

In 2012, state and territory governments agreed on the development of a national accreditation scheme to harmonise the roles and qualifications of pilot and escort drivers across Australia. This would aim to improve efficiency to meet the growing demand for the movements of oversize loads.

What is the purpose of the NTC’s discussion paper?

The first phase of this project was managed by Austroads. This involved state and territory governments working together to agree on a broad vision for the national accreditation scheme.

The NTC’s discussion paper continues the work of the first phase to identify and discuss a proposed national accreditation scheme for pilot and escort vehicle drivers in more detail, in order to generate feedback from industry and other stakeholders on the proposed scheme and how it should be structured.

What are the potential benefits of the national accreditation scheme?

Once in operation, the national accreditation scheme would harmonise the requirements to become a pilot or an escort vehicle driver across the country.

National consistency would give full recognition of pilot and escort vehicle drivers across all states and territories. This makes it easier and more efficient to transport oversize loads across borders.

Who will administer the scheme?

Once fully developed and endorsed by states and territories, the new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator is expected to administer the scheme.

What are the key issues the NTC is seeking input on in the discussion paper?

A full list of questions for discussion is provided within the discussion paper to guide stakeholder input.

Examples of the types of feedback the NTC are seeking include:

- current problems that pilot and escort vehicle drivers face with getting accredited to transport oversize loads across borders
- views on the kind of experience and qualifications drivers should have
how the current arrangements impact the pilot and escort driver industry, and in turn the transportation of oversize loads.

What happens next?

Following the close of the public consultation period, the NTC will consider submissions and provide this information to Austroads who will hold a series of workshops with government and industry representatives. The workshops will focus on refining the core aspects of the proposed scheme and discussions of differences in approach, so as to achieve an agreed position.

The NTC will then make recommendations for the harmonisation of accreditation requirements and standards to the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials Committee (comprising CEOs of transport departments and road agencies), while Austroads will develop an Operational Guideline that provides a finalised, consistent approach for the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to implement and manage.

What is the operational guideline that Austroads is developing?

The operational guideline would support the implementation of the national accreditation scheme by providing details of how the scheme would operate, such as conditions for accreditation and the roles of the various agencies.

Does this project address inconsistencies in regulations between states with regards to over-dimensional vehicles?

No, this project addresses the accreditation requirements for pilot and escort drivers, not the regulations regarding over-dimensional vehicles. The Over-Size-Over-Mass (OSOM) project is a separate task that NTC is managing in parallel to this project. OSOM aims to achieve national consistency in the regulation of over dimensional vehicles through exploring issues such as the number of pilot and escort vehicles, signage requirements, warning lights and flags.

Please contact the NTC for further information on the OSOM project.

How can I have my say on the proposed national accreditation scheme?

The discussion paper is available for comment at www.ntc.gov.au until 21 February 2014.

You can also send to:

National Transport Commission,
Level 15/628 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000.

For further information, please contact:

National Transport Commission
Level 15/628 Bourke Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000
Phone: 03 9236 5000
Email: enquiries@ntc.gov.au