

Increased Width for Safer Freight Vehicles

In September 2023, the Australian Government changed the national road vehicle standards to facilitate the supply of safer trucks in Australia, reduce road trauma and boost productivity.

The Safer Freight Vehicles package includes an increase to the overall width limit from 2.50 to 2.55 metres for new trucks fitted with a number of specific safety features.

The new safety features include devices to reduce blind spots, electronic stability control, advanced emergency braking, a lane departure warning system, more detailed reflective markings and protection devices to help prevent vulnerable road users from being caught under the rear wheels of heavy vehicles.

Currently, the 2.55m is only available to NEW trucks with a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) over 4.5t and fitted with specific safety features compliant with the following Australian Design Rules (ADRs):

1	ADR 14/03 or later - Indirect vision devices
2	ADR 35/07 or later - heavy vehicle braking
3	ADR 97/00 or later - Advanced Emergency Braking (AEB)
4	ADR 99/00 or later – Lane Departure Warning systems
5	ADR 105 (Blind Spot Information Systems) [only on vehicles more than 8t GVM and only new vehicles from November 2025]
6	ADR 106/00 or later – Side Underrun Protection [N/A for cab chassis and prime movers]
7	Conspicuity markings complying with ADR 13/00 or later

Table 1: Australian Design Rules governing the safety features

Eligible Vehicles

Safer Freight Vehicle only applies to rigid or cab chassis trucks and prime movers.

The Australian Design Rules (ADR) categorise the above as NB2 (GVM over 4.5t up to 12t goods carrying) and NC (GVM exceeding 12t goods carrying) vehicles.

Trailers and buses are not eligible as Safer Freight Vehicles.

Load Restraint

At this stage, these changes do not increase the current allowance for:

1. a permanently fixed webbing assembly-type device, including any part of the device load restraint.
An example of a permanently fixed webbing assembly-type device—is a curtain-side device.
2. removable load restraint equipment, if the overall width of the heavy vehicle, including any part of the equipment, is not more than 2.55m

Heavy vehicle access

Safer Freight Vehicles exceeding 2.50m in width (max 2.55m) can access the road network via a Class 3 permit through the NHVR Portal or operate under the PBS Scheme.

Operators wishing to operate under such a Class 3 permit must include evidence from the truck supplier (OEM – Original Equipment Manufacturer) stating that the vehicle complies with the Safer Freight Vehicle (SFV) requirements (see Table 1).

These access requirements are effective from 1 October 2023.

Changes to the HVNL and supporting regulations

The National Transport Commission is working on adopting these changes into the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) currently, and more guidance will be released once this work has been finalised.

Once the HVNL is amended, the Register of Approved Vehicles (RAV) is expected to have a flag indicating that the vehicle complies with the SFV's requirements.

The NHVR is developing a certification process through VSB6 in case an operator wishes to retrofit a vehicle to comply with all SFV-specific safety features.

For more information on this change, contact the vehicle standards team at vehiclestandards@nhvr.gov.au

For more information:

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