

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and Bus Industry Confederation (BIC) are partnering on a joint education initiative aimed at enhancing industry awareness and compliance with Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) obligations.

Associations such as BIC provide valuable frontline insight into the challenges facing bus operators, and serve as a critical and trusted industry support.

In this collaborative effort, the NHVR and BIC are educating industry on how they can ensure they are meeting their safety obligations under the HVNL, with a particular focus on how to comply with fatigue management requirements.

Together, we can create safer roads for all.

THE NHVR'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING SAFE BUS OPERATIONS

The NHVR is Australia's national regulator for heavy vehicles exceeding 4.5 tonnes GVM, including buses, by administering and enforcing the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* (HVNL) across Australia, excluding Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The NHVR actively promotes and supports safe bus operations by collaborating with industry partners to educate the industry on its safety obligations under the HVNL with a particular emphasis on fatigue management and work diaries.

Through regular activities and operations the NHVR conducts checks to ensure compliance. In response to intelligence and risk analysis the NHVR develops and provides targeted guidance material and education tools to help industry improve safety practices.

The NHVR's ultimate goal is to improve heavy vehicle safety, and ensure every passenger and driver reaches their destination safely.

OPERATION SOLSTICE

Operation Solstice was a month-long national bus operation conducted by the NHVR in 2025, which intercepted more than 2,200 buses to assess critical compliance areas.

Launched specifically in response to several tragic bus crashes across Australia in previous years the results revealed an overall non-compliance rate of 19.1%, the majority being minor issues.

The NHVR issued 39 infringements and offence reports, primarily for fatigue-related breaches, underscoring the need for further support to improve safety and compliance within the industry.



Contact us

For further information about the NHVR's activities, functions and services, visit www.nhvr.gov.au or contact us via:

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*Standard 13 XX XX call charges apply. Please check with your phone provider.

Working Together: Building a Safer Bus Industry

FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

Fatigue is a significant safety issue on Australian roads, and all bus drivers are legally required to have sufficient rest between shifts to ensure they are fit to drive.

While drivers must manage their own fatigue and record their work hours accurately, operators and other parties engaging bus services also have a responsibility to ensure drivers are not operating a bus while fatigued.



Key things to remember:

- For buses with a GVM over 4.5 tonnes, operators and related parties fall under Chain of Responsibility (CoR) provisions and must implement systems to manage fatigue risks effectively.
- Simply complying with the work and rest hour requirements for the applicable regime selected by the operator does not guarantee that a driver is fit to drive. Ensure you are aware of all obligations regarding fitness to drive.
- When transport services are subcontracted, CoR obligations remain with the original parties. Parties must understand their continuing obligations when services are subcontracted – always check if unsure.
- Failing to meet these duties can lead to legal consequences.
- Work and rest hour limits apply to more than driving, it also includes other tasks such as loading luggage and attending to passengers.
- Be conscious of secondary employment and how it may impact fatigue management measures, and ensure fatigue requirements are up to date.

Managing fatigue is a shared responsibility, with the safety of drivers, passengers, and other road users depending on collective efforts to minimise risks.

More information on Fatigue Management:

www.nhvr.gov.au/bus-fatigue

VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

Bus drivers and operators play a critical role in ensuring the mechanical safety and overall condition of their vehicles through thorough pre- and post-departure checks and regular heavy vehicle inspections.

These are essential in identifying any mechanical issues or maintenance needs, helping to prevent potential safety risks on the road.

Pre- and post-departure checks includes checking seat belts, where fitted, are functional, vehicle warning/malfunction lamps are not illuminated, there are no obvious fluid leaks, and loose items within the cabin are properly stowed.

An NHVR daily checklist guide is available here:

www.nhvr.gov.au/dailycheck

More information on vehicle inspections:

www.nhvr.gov.au/nhvim



ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS – WHAT TO EXPECT

NHVR Safety and Compliance Officers (SCOs) conduct roadside inspections to identify defects or compliance issues on buses.

Defect Notices classify issues as:

- Self-clearing or Minor, allowing the bus to continue with required repairs within a timeframe;
- Major, permitting journey completion but mandating repair before further use; or
- Grounded, which means the bus must be immediately taken out of service until all defects are rectified and confirmed safe.

What if there are children or passengers on board?

If a bus carrying children or other passengers is found to have a defect or be non-compliant (e.g. the driver hasn't correctly filled out a work diary), NHVR SCOs may take a number of different actions, including:

- Allowing the journey to continue if the defect doesn't pose an immediate safety risk e.g. a minor seat issue.
- Working with the operator to arrange alternative safe transport for passengers (e.g. with another bus or operator), if the defect or compliance issue poses a serious risk.

The NHVR will not allow unsafe vehicles or drivers to transport passengers, but officers will work with the driver/operator to minimise disruption and ensure everyone is transferred safely. NHVR SCOs are instructed not to film children on Body Worn Cameras.

If you require further information regarding an infringement please refer to the details on the back of the notice.

