# Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative Final Report

## LOG HAULAGE CODE: INDUSTRY TOOL AND GUIDANCE

HVSI 649

**Organisation:** Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA)
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# Acknowledgements

The Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA) acknowledges the support of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) through the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative (HVSI) for funding this project.

AFCA recognises the contribution of the Industry Reference Group (IRG), forest service businesses, haulage contractors, supply-chain representatives, regulators and industry stakeholders who engaged in consultation sessions, User Acceptance Testing (UAT) and feedback processes throughout the project.

The project team thanks the businesses and operators who shared operational insights, participated in regional consultations and tested the online tool to ensure the final outputs were practical, relevant and fit for purpose.

## Partners and Collaborators:

The project was delivered through collaboration between industry, regulators and supply-chain participants. Contributions from the IRG, consultation participants, forest service businesses, growers, processors, manufacturers and regulators ensured the tools and guidance materials were aligned with operational needs across the forestry supply chain.

These contributions strengthened the project's ability to support improved safety, compliance and commercial management outcomes for log haulage operations.

Partners and collaborators included:

- NHVR
- AFCA
- Pursuit Consultants (project team)
- ForestFit™ (technology development and hosting)
- IRG members:
    - Elphinstone Engineering (Tasmania)
    - Kennedy Trailers (Victoria)
    - Leeson's Logging and Cartage (Victoria)
    - Mangan Logging and Haulage (New South Wales)
    - Orana Enterprises (Tasmania)
    - Sunchip Group (Queensland)
- Participants across 10 consultation sessions, including:
    - Forest service businesses and haulage operators
    - Forestry supply-chain stakeholders (growers and processors)
- User Acceptance Testing participants.

## Acknowledgment of other Funders:

NHVR, through the HVSI, supports implementable, value-for-money projects that deliver tangible improvements to heavy vehicle safety.

## Grant Purpose and Objectives

The project delivered a structured, practical response to support implementation of the Log Haulage Code of Practice (LHC) across the forestry supply chain through tools, guidance and stakeholder engagement.

### Project Description:

The HVSI 649 project delivered online tools and guidance materials to support all parties in the Chain of Responsibility (CoR) to navigate and apply the LHC and Master Code.

The project translated legislative duties into operational tools that:

- Map activities, hazards and controls across log haulage operations
- Support identification and assessment of safety risks
- Provide structured guidance for implementing reasonably practicable controls
- Embed monitoring, verification and review processes
- Strengthen CoR collaboration across contractual and operational interfaces

Consultation identified priority areas requiring guidance, including verification and assurance processes, subcontractor management and clarity of roles and responsibilities across the supply chain. These areas directly informed the structure and content of the online tool and guidance materials.

In addition to the funded scope, following the Mater Code registration, the project delivered a complementary Master Code online tool. This work was undertaken without additional funding to ensure industry could apply both the LHC and Master Code within a consistent and integrated framework.

The result is a practical system that enables businesses to move beyond awareness of obligations to demonstrable implementation, supporting due diligence, executive oversight and continuous improvement across the forestry supply chain.

### Project Objectives:

The project objectives were to:

- Support industry to navigate and apply the LHC and Master Code.
- Improve identification of hazards, controls and compliance gaps.
- Strengthen safety, governance and commercial management practices.
- Improve consistency in application of CoR obligations.
- Provide practical tools to support implementation and verification.

### Expected Outcomes:

The project was designed to deliver:

- Improved understanding and application of code requirements.
- Increased consistency in interpretation across industry.
- Stronger safety and compliance practices.
- Improved visibility of risk across the supply chain.
- Practical tools to support implementation, monitoring and continuous improvement.

# Summary of Project Activities

## Activities Completed:

**Major activities**

The project was delivered between July 2025 and February 2026 and included the following major activities:

- Project plan, governance framework and communications strategy established.
- IRG established to provide oversight and industry input.
- Stakeholder engagement and consultation undertaken across multiple jurisdictions.
- Development of online tools aligned to LHC requirements.
- Development of guidance materials and implementation resources.
- UAT undertaken with industry participants.
- Iterative refinement based on stakeholder feedback.
- Final tools and guidance materials released and demonstrated to industry.
- Development of a complementary Master Code online tool beyond the original project scope to align with the final registered code.

**Online Tools and Resources**

The project delivered a publicly accessible online tool built on an Airtable-based platform and delivered via the ForestFit™ Portal. The tool supports businesses to navigate and apply code requirements in a structured and practical format.

Key features include:

- Search, filter and sort functionality across activities, hazards and controls.
- Structured navigation of LHC and Master Code requirements.
- Gap analysis to assess compliance, identify gaps and record actions.
- Cumulative risk gap analysis to identify interacting operational and commercial pressures.
- Ability to export and download data to support internal review and recordkeeping.
- Overview pages linking users to key obligations and assessment areas.

Ongoing technology management was not considered at the outset of the project by AFCA or NHVR. This was identified during delivery and proactively addressed by the project team through a solution whereby ForestFit™ funds the platform, with ongoing user support and system management provided by the project team. This ensures continued access, system reliability and functionality for industry at no additional cost.

**Guidance Materials**

A suite of guidance materials was developed to support implementation of the LHC and complement the online tool. These materials translate legislative and code requirements into practical, operational guidance.

Key components include:

- Guidance aligned to key implementation areas:
    - Decision and Influence
    - Simultaneous Business Operations
    - Statement of Work

    - Subcontractors
    - Training
    - Verification and Assurance
    - Cumulative Risks
- Downloadable templates and checklists to support implementation
- Practical examples and visual guidance to support understanding
- Supporting materials linking operational, commercial and safety responsibilities across the supply chain.

## Supporting Documents:

Social media and press releases have been provided throughout the project for approval prior to publication.

## Timeline/Project Schedule:

The project was delivered in accordance with the approved milestone schedule:

- Milestone 1 – Agreement execution (Jul 2025)
- Milestone 2 – Project plan and communications strategy (Jul-Aug 2025)
- Milestone 3 – Consultation (Sep-Oct 2025)
- Milestone 4 – Draft Tool and Guidance (Nov 2025)
- Milestone 5 – Final Tool and Guidance (Dec 2025)
- Milestone 6 - Final report and project close (Feb 2026)

# Program Management

## Overall

The project was delivered by AFCA, with project delivery undertaken by Pursuit Consultants, who have specialist expertise in forestry certification, governance, stakeholder engagement and digital platform development. AFCA was responsible for management of the NHVR funding agreement, financial oversight, and ensuring delivery aligned with funding requirements.

The project team comprised a Project Manager and Project Coordinator. The Project Manager was responsible for overall governance, milestone delivery, stakeholder engagement, risk management, reporting and liaison with NHVR and the Industry Reference Group (IRG). The Project Coordinator supported day-to-day coordination, stakeholder communications, document development, consultation logistics and testing of the online tool and guidance materials.

An IRG was established to provide strategic advice, review outputs and support industry engagement, ensuring feedback was reflected in the final deliverables.

## Risk Management

A risk register was established and monitored throughout the project.

Key risks included:

- Timing of Master Code registration
- Limited time available for consultation and testing.
- Challenges engaging businesses during peak operational periods.
- Potential differences in interpretation of LHC requirements.
- Technical risks associated with platform functionality and usability.
- Ongoing technology management and platform ownership following project completion

These risks were managed through:

- Focusing the project on the registered LHC rather than waiting for the Master Code.
- Staged consultation and testing.
- A flexible platform design to support future updates.
- Broad stakeholder engagement to validate assumptions and interpretations.
- Completing of UAT before finalisation.
- A post-project solution whereby the platform is funded by ForestFit™, with ongoing user support and system management provided by the project team to ensure continued access and functionality for industry.

## Stakeholder Management

Stakeholders contributed through consultation sessions, interviews, online meetings, regional engagement activities, UAT and review of draft materials.

Engagement was structured to include both broad consultation and targeted business engagement, ensuring a range of operational, commercial and regional perspectives informed project outcomes.

The IRG played a key role in validating content, identifying priority issues and ensuring the project outputs remained practical and relevant for industry application.

A broad cross-section of the forestry supply chain was represented, including:

- Forest service businesses
- Log haulage operators
- Prime contractors and subcontractors
- Trailer manufacturers
- Regulators
- Forest managers and supply-chain representatives including processors and ports
- AFCA members
- Industry Reference Group members.

## Project Communications

The communications strategy identified the importance of consistent messaging across safety, compliance, accountability, CoR and commercial management within the forestry supply chain.

Activities were designed to build awareness, support stakeholder engagement and drive industry uptake of the online tool and guidance materials.

Consultation was undertaken iteratively, with feedback progressively incorporated into tool and guidance development. This ensured outputs were tested, refined and aligned with industry needs throughout the project lifecycle.

**Messaging and publication**

- Development of consistent project key messages for use across speeches, presentations, social media and written collateral.
- Development of a project overview flyer and IRG invitation pack.
- National live online session to demonstrate the final online tool and guidance materials following completion.
- Publication of the final online tool and guidance materials through the ForestFit Portal and associated communication channels.

**Stakeholder engagement and industry communications**

- Distribution of targeted email updates to AFCA members, sponsors, consultation participants and broader industry stakeholders.
- Direct promotion through IRG members and industry networks.
- Regional consultation invitations distributed through forestry supply-chain contacts.
- Promotion of consultation sessions through email, online meetings and one-on-one stakeholder engagement.
- Inclusion of project updates in AFCA newsletters and member communications.
- Industry presentations explaining the project objectives.
- Use of consultation sessions as both an engagement and awareness-building mechanism.
- Distribution of draft tools and guidance materials for industry beta testing and feedback.

**Digital, media and promotion**

- Promotion through AFCA and ForestFit™ websites
- Social media posts across Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram at key project milestones.
- Promotion through industry media, including intended use of Wood Central as a key media partner for articles and social media distribution.

## Issues

The most significant issue affecting the project was the delay in the registration of the Master Code.

At the commencement of the project, the Master Code was expected to be updated and available for consultation. However, the timing and extent of the proposed revisions created uncertainty about including the Master Code in the final deliverables.

To address this issue, the project team prioritised the registered LHC as the primary compliance reference and incorporated only contextual references to the Master Code where relevant. This ensured that the final outputs remained accurate, stable and fit for purpose.

Following completion of the online tool and resources for the LHC, the project team undertook additional unfunded work to develop a complementary online tool for the updated Master Code once it was finalised and registered. This additional work was completed to ensure industry had access to a consistent approach across both the LHC and Master Code, recognising that businesses often need to navigate both documents together.

The Master Code tool was developed using the same structure, navigation and gap analysis functionality as the LHC tool, enabling users to search, filter and assess activities, hazards and controls in a practical and accessible format.

# Achieved Outcomes and Impact

## What Was Achieved:

The project successfully delivered the key objectives established at commencement by developing practical online tools and guidance materials to support implementation of the LHC and Master Code across the forestry supply chain.

The project delivered:

- A publicly accessible online tool hosted on the ForestFit™ Portal, and accessible through the AFCA website, to support businesses to search, filter and assess activities, hazards and controls relevant to log haulage operations
- Structured gap analysis functionality enabling businesses to assess compliance, identify gaps, record evidence and document corrective actions
- A cumulative risk gap analysis tool to help identify interacting commercial and operational pressures across the supply chain
- Downloadable guidance materials covering:
    - Decision and Influence
    - Simultaneous Business Operations
    - Statement of Work
    - Subcontractors
    - Training
    - Verification and Assurance
    - Cumulative Risks
- Practical templates, checklists, flowcharts and examples to support implementation
- A Forest Services Commercial Management overview illustrating how commercial, operational and safety responsibilities intersect across the supply chain
- A supplementary Master Code online tool developed beyond the funded scope to ensure long-term alignment between both codes within a consistent framework.

The project aligned strongly with the original objectives by:

- Improving accessibility and understanding of the LHC and Master Code
- Supporting businesses to better understand CoR, Primary Duty and executive duty obligations
- Strengthening commercial management and verification processes
- Supporting businesses to identify and manage compliance gaps
- Providing practical tools to strengthen safety, accountability and due diligence across the forestry supply chain
- Delivering a scalable and sustainable platform capable of future updates

Quantitative outcomes included:

- 10 consultation sessions delivered nationally
- 86 participants engaged across the forestry supply chain
- 7 direct business consultations undertaken

- 6 IRG member organisations involved throughout the project
- Multiple jurisdictions represented across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia
- More than 14 LHC activity areas incorporated into the tool
- More than 140 hazards and over 250 controls incorporated into the LHC tool structure
- 7 major guidance topics developed into standalone implementation resources

Qualitative outcomes included:

- Increased awareness and understanding of the newly registered LHC
- Strong industry support for practical, searchable and downloadable compliance resources
- Improved understanding of how commercial arrangements, subcontractor models and scheduling decisions influence CoR outcomes
- Greater visibility of cumulative risk and shared responsibility across the supply chain
- Improved consistency in interpretation of code obligations across different businesses and jurisdictions
- Increased capability for businesses to demonstrate due diligence, executive oversight and continuous improvement

The project also created a foundation for future industry improvements by establishing a flexible digital platform that can be expanded as legislation, codes and industry expectations continue to evolve.

## Impact:

In addition to specific project impacts, the project delivered broader benefits across the forestry and heavy vehicle sectors by providing a forum for improving industry understanding of CoR, Primary Duty and commercial risk management obligations when undertaken log haulage operations.

**Safety Benefits**

From a safety perspective the project improved safety in log haulage operations by translating legal obligations into practical tools, guidance and gap analysis processes that businesses can use in day-to-day operations resulting in:

- Improved understanding of heavy vehicle safety obligations.
- Increased focus on proactive risk identification and management.
- Better alignment between operational controls and safety systems.
- Greater consistency in how businesses assess and document compliance.

**Commercial Benefits**

The project helped businesses identify practical ways to strengthen due diligence, reduce compliance gaps and improve commercial management processes. This may reduce the likelihood of incidents, enforcement action, contract disputes, reputational damage and unplanned downtime.

- Improved understanding of commercial responsibilities across the supply chain.
- Stronger contract management and verification processes.
- Greater transparency regarding subcontractor management and assurance.

**Industry Benefits**

From an industry perspective, the project strengthened awareness of how operational, contractual and scheduling decisions can create or reduce safety risks across the supply chain. Consultation sessions provided an opportunity to improve consistency in how businesses interpret and apply the Log Haulage Code, this included:

- Creation of standardised, accessible resources for forestry haulage businesses.
- Increased awareness of the newly registered LHC.
- Improved consistency across different business types and regions.
- Greater readiness for future changes to the Master Code and HVNL requirements.

**Unexpected outcomes**

Unexpected positive outcomes included strong support from industry participants for the continuation and expansion of the online tool and guidance materials beyond the project period.

- Stronger than anticipated interest in cumulative risk management and commercial management arrangements.
- Significant demand for guidance on subcontractor management, verification and assurance, and simultaneous business operations.
- Greater industry concern about how contracts, schedules and pricing decisions can unintentionally create unsafe behaviours.
- Identification of the need for a broader Forest Services Commercial Management framework to explain how operational, safety and contractual responsibilities interact.

**Key supporting outputs**

Two notable standouts that all consultation participants found very helpful that were developed at the outset of the project were the visual mapping of:

- Log Haulage: Acts, regulations and codes (see attached Final public report).
- Forest services commercial management (see attached Final public report).

The commercial management mapping was progressively refined throughout the project as consultation findings, business feedback and IRG input were received. This iterative approach helped identify where different parties believed key operational, safety and contractual issues were arising across the supply chain. It highlighted recurring concerns around pricing pressure, subcontractor arrangements, scheduling, waiting times, under-utilisation of equipment, changing work scopes, loading constraints and unclear responsibility for risk controls.

The mapping process proved valuable in demonstrating how commercial decisions influence safety outcomes and where stronger communication, verification and allocation of responsibility may be required across the supply chain.

# Project Evaluation

## Project Success:

The project met, and in some areas exceeded, the expected outcomes and objectives established at commencement.

The project successfully delivered publicly accessible online tools, downloadable guidance materials and practical templates to support implementation of the LHC across the forestry supply chain. The final outputs aligned strongly with the original objectives of improving understanding of CoR obligations, strengthening safety management, supporting commercial verification and improving access to practical compliance resources.

The project also achieved strong industry engagement through 10 consultation sessions, 86 participants, 7 direct business consultations and ongoing input from the IRG.

In several areas, the project exceeded the original objectives. This included the development of a cumulative risk gap analysis, broader work on Forest Services Commercial Management, and the additional development of an online Master Code tool after the updated code was registered.

The project also created a long-term platform capable of future updates, expansion and integration with other industry guidance, which was a stronger outcome than originally anticipated.

Since project completion, feedback has continued to be received from businesses and stakeholders using the online tools and guidance materials. Early feedback has indicated that the tools are being used to support safety management systems, contractor engagement, internal reviews and compliance discussions. Because the tool is embedded within the ForestFit™ Portal, the project team has committed to continuing to make refinements, usability improvements and content updates as required in response to stakeholder feedback and industry expectations.

As communicated to NHVR mid-project, any future changes to legislation, codes or regulatory requirements that would require substantive updates to the tool and guidance would need to be considered at that time in consultation with NHVR and relevant stakeholders.

## Lessons Learned:

The project highlighted the challenge of translating complex legal obligations into practical tools that businesses can easily use. Many businesses reported confusion about CoR obligations, cumulative risk, verification responsibilities and where accountability sits across the supply chain. This was addressed by using plain language, visual diagrams, practical examples and downloadable templates throughout the guidance materials and online tools.

Another challenge was that many of the most significant safety risks were not purely operational, but are influenced by commercial arrangements, including pricing, scheduling, waiting times, subcontractor models and changing work scopes. These issues are often harder to address because they sit across multiple businesses and decision-makers. The project responded by progressively developing commercial arrangements mapping, cumulative risk guidance and Forest Services Commercial Management content to better explain how commercial decisions can influence safety outcomes.

A further challenge was ensuring consultation captured the diversity of forestry operations across different jurisdictions, business sizes and haulage models. Businesses often have very different structures, contractual arrangements, road conditions, loading environments and subcontractor models. This was addressed through a combination of regional consultation sessions, direct business engagement and IRG input to ensure a broad range of perspectives were considered.

The project also reinforced the importance of iterative consultation. Early feedback often evolved as stakeholders engaged with draft tools, examples and visual layouts. Businesses were generally better able to identify issues and improvement opportunities once they could see practical examples rather than discussing concepts in the abstract. This highlighted the value of staged development and iterative refinement throughout the project lifecycle.

Lessons learned that may assist future projects include:

- Build flexibility into project design where external regulatory processes may change during delivery.
- Use iterative consultation and provide visual examples wherever possible.
- Recognise that commercial and contractual issues can be as important as operational risks.
- Ensure consultation includes a broad cross-section of regions, business types and supply-chain roles.
- Use simple, practical language rather than legal terminology where possible.
- Select digital platforms that allow future updates and expansion.
- Consider long-term ownership, maintenance and technology management arrangements from project commencement.
- Recognise that stakeholders often value practical templates, checklists and examples more than high-level guidance alone.

# Sustainability and Future Plans

## Sustainability:

The outcomes of the project will be sustained through continued hosting and maintenance of the online tools and guidance materials within the ForestFit™ Portal.

Embedding the tools within an existing platform provides a practical and cost-effective way to maintain access for industry while allowing future refinements and updates to be made over time. The ForestFit™ Portal already supports broader safety, certification and compliance activities across the forestry services sector of harvest, haulage, civil and silviculture, making it a suitable long-term home for the project outputs.

The guidance materials, templates, checklists and downloadable resources will continue to be available for businesses to use in safety management systems, subcontractor engagement, training, internal reviews and due diligence processes.

The project also has long-term benefits because it created a structured framework for understanding the relationship between operational practices, commercial arrangements and CoR obligations. This framework can continue to support future work on safety management, contractor management, commercial verification and executive due diligence.

AFCA and the project team have committed to continuing to promote and support the use of the resources through industry engagement, ForestFit™ activities and stakeholder communications. Further refinement of the tools may occur over time in response to stakeholder feedback, operational experience and identified usability improvements.

While no specific future funding has been committed at this stage, the platform has been designed so that additional modules, guidance topics and functionality can be incorporated in future if further funding or industry support becomes available.

## Next Steps:

Future steps for the project include continued promotion of the online tool and guidance materials through AFCA, ForestFit™ and broader industry networks.

Planned next steps include:

- Continued refinement of the online tool and guidance materials based on user experience and stakeholder feedback.
- Potential development of additional modules covering related topics such as the transition from NHVAS to HVA, subcontractor management, fatigue, maintenance and executive due diligence.
- Continued promotion through industry events, presentations, websites and social media.
- Exploration of opportunities to integrate the tools into broader safety management systems, contractor prequalification processes and ForestFit certification activities.
- Consideration of future funding opportunities to expand the functionality of the platform and associated resources.
- Continued collaboration with NHVR, industry bodies and other stakeholders to support alignment with future changes to legislation, codes and guidance materials.
- Potential use of the platform to support broader forestry heavy vehicle safety initiatives in the future.