

Restricted access vehicles

Compliance and Enforcement bulletin 1

This bulletin provides practical advice to help heavy vehicle drivers and operators comply with the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) regarding requirements for restricted access vehicles.

What is a restricted access vehicle?

The HVNL and regulations prescribe the mass and dimension requirements for heavy vehicles. For the purposes of this bulletin, the two key types of heavy vehicle are:

General access vehicle

Vehicles that comply with mass and dimension limits and do not require a notice or permit to operate on the road network. These vehicles have general access to the road network unless the road is sign-posted otherwise.

Restricted access vehicle (RAV)

For the purposes of this bulletin, a RAV Class 1, 2 or 3 vehicle that operates under a notice or permit and vehicles operating under higher mass limits (HML) that can generally only access certain parts of the road network (a vehicle that is not a general access vehicle).

Examples of RAVs include:

- B-doubles and road trains
- special purpose vehicles, including agricultural machinery and mobile cranes that exceed general mass or dimension limits
- combinations longer than 19m
- vehicles higher than 4.3m other than a specified semitrailer (see note 1)
- buses (other than an articulated bus) which are longer than 12.5m but less than 14.5m (also known as a 'Controlled Access Bus')
- combinations carrying large indivisible oversize or overmass loads
- Performance-Based Standards (PBS) vehicles other than a specified PBS vehicle (see note 2).

Note 1 – A specified semitrailer means a semitrailer that:

- is not a PBS vehicle; and
- has an air suspension system with effective dampers fitted; and
- has a deck height not higher than 1.2m for at least 50% of its deck length; and
- if in a combination - the combination -
 - (i) consists only of a prime mover towing a single semitrailer attached to the prime mover by a fifth wheel coupling; or a B-double; or a B-triple; and

- (ii) has a mass not more than 90% of the prescribed mass requirements for the combination.

Note 2 – A specified PBS vehicle means a vehicle that is not a bus;

- and is not longer than 20m;
- and is the subject of a current PBS vehicle approval at performance level 1;
- and complies with the PBS vehicle approval;
- and complies with the general mass limits for the vehicle, regardless of whether the PBS vehicle approval authorises a higher mass limit.

Where can I find roads and networks for my RAV?

A RAV can be granted access to approved roads and networks through a notice or permit.

Notices are published on the NHVR website and provide road network access and other exemptions or concessions to classes of vehicles, drivers and industry sectors (subject to specific conditions). The legal road networks are generally referenced through links to maps or lists on road authority websites. In some cases, a notice itself may include a description of the network.

Permits are issued for a specific vehicle (or vehicles) and provide road network access and other exemptions and concessions for that vehicle(s) only (subject to specific conditions). Permits will generally specify the approved routes and areas. They may also reference maps or networks published in other locations such as the NHVR or road authority websites. Permits must be carried by the driver of the vehicle and are not published on the NHVR website.



Combine harvester



3-axle all-terrain crane



Prime mover and platform trailer with 6 axles



9-axle B-double (other axle combinations are possible)

Examples of RAVs

What are Class 1, 2 and 3 vehicles?

The HVNL provides for three classes of RAVs, namely Class 1, 2 and 3, which will appear on documents such as notices and permits. While it may be useful for operators to become familiar with these classes, the NHVR will also continue to use common terms such as B-double and road train.

This bulletin provides some common examples of Class 1, 2 and 3 heavy vehicles for guidance only. For further examples, please refer to the Classes of heavy vehicles fact sheet at www.nhvr.gov.au/publications

Class 1 vehicles

Vehicles that, together with their load, do not comply with prescribed mass or dimension limits, including:

- special purpose vehicles (e.g. mobile crane)
- agricultural vehicles other than agricultural trailers (e.g. harvester, tractor)
- vehicles or combinations carrying, or designed for the purpose of carrying, a large indivisible item (e.g. prime mover and low loader combination).

Class 1 vehicles do not include B-doubles, road train or vehicles carrying freight containers designed for multi-modal transport.

Class 2 vehicles

Vehicles that comply with their prescribed mass and dimension limits, including:

- B-doubles – consists of a prime mover towing two semitrailers, with the first semitrailer being attached directly to the prime mover by a fifth wheel coupling and the second semitrailer being mounted on the rear of the first semitrailer by a fifth wheel coupling
- road trains – a combination, other than a B-double, consisting of a motor vehicle towing at least 2 trailers, excluding any converter dolly supporting a semitrailer
- buses (other than an articulated bus) longer than 12.5m but less than 14.5m (also known as a 'Controlled Access Bus')
- vehicle carriers – a combination designed and built to carry vehicles on more than one deck that together with its load is longer than 19m or higher than 4.3m
- livestock carriers – a heavy vehicle or combination, that is higher than 4.3m and built to carry cattle, sheep, pigs or horses
- Performance-Based Standards (PBS) vehicles (other than a specified PBS vehicle) – which can operate on road networks that have been classified as suitable for their level of performance.

Class 3 vehicles

Vehicles which, together with their load, do not comply with prescribed mass or dimension limits and are not Class 1 vehicles. Examples include:

- rigid truck and dog trailer combinations weighing more than 42.5t
- B-doubles or road trains transporting loads wider than 2.5m.

Notices and permits specify a range of conditions relevant to the use of the vehicle or combination. This can include, but is not limited to:

- mass and dimensions
- routes and areas
- travel, roads and vehicle conditions.

Mass and dimension requirements

For Class 1 and Class 3 vehicles, the mass and dimension requirements will form part of the conditions of a relevant Class 1 or Class 3 notice or permit.

For Class 2 vehicles, the mass and dimension requirements are prescribed in the *Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulations* and do not form part of the conditions of a Class 2 notice or permit.

For Class 2 PBS vehicles, the mass and dimension limits are prescribed in the relevant PBS vehicle approval.

What if I don't comply with a notice or permit?

Class 1 and Class 3 vehicles

If a vehicle operating under a Class 1 or Class 3 notice or permit breaches any condition of the notice or permit (including mass and/or dimensions), the vehicle will be assessed against the legal limits and not the mass or dimension limits stated in the notice or permit. This means the vehicle will be treated as if it is not operating under notice or permit, while the breach exists.

Class 2 vehicles

If a Class 2 vehicle breaches a mass or dimension requirement, the vehicle will be assessed against the mass and dimension limits prescribed in the *Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulations*.

A Class 2 PBS vehicle that breaches a mass or dimension limit will be assessed against the mass and dimension limits prescribed in the relevant PBS vehicle approval.

The HVNL provides for a separate offence for contravening a condition of Class 2 notice or permit.

What is offence categorisation?

Risk-based offences for mass, dimension and loading are categorised as minor, substantial or severe.

Depending on the severity of the offence, the driver or operator may be issued a direction to reduce or adjust the vehicles mass and/or dimensions before the journey is allowed to continue.

Provided the notice or permit the vehicle is operating under is valid, the vehicle will be allowed to continue to operate once the breach has been rectified, providing it is otherwise compliant.

This means that you will only have to reduce the mass and/or dimension of the load to the level specified in the notice or permit.

Driver responsibilities

Before commencing, and during, a journey, drivers should ensure that:

- the vehicle they are driving complies with the relevant mass and dimension requirements
- the vehicle is compliant with the conditions and requirements any notice or permit the vehicle is operating under
- a copy of the permit, notice and other documentation (if required to be carried) is in their possession throughout the journey
- the route is approved for travel under the relevant notice or permit noting any relevant bridge, tunnel or other dimension restrictions.

Operator responsibilities

Vehicle operators should ensure that:

- drivers are provided with valid and appropriate documents required to operate the heavy vehicle in compliance with the HVNL and any relevant notice or permit
- drivers understand their responsibilities regarding the operation of the vehicle in accordance with the documentation
- vehicles are operated in accordance with any conditions or requirements of the documentation, such as mass or dimension requirements, warning devices, routes or restricted time of day or hours of operation
- the route is approved for travel under the relevant notice or permit noting any relevant bridge, tunnel or other dimension restrictions.

Chain of Responsibility

Under Chain of Responsibility laws, all responsible parties in the transport supply chain must take positive steps to prevent any breach of the mass, dimension and load restraint provisions. Visit www.nhvr.gov.au/sms for more information.

Which notices and permits do I have to carry?

If you are operating under a notice, it will specify if it must be carried. For a list of notices that must be carried visit www.nhvr.gov.au/notices.

If you are operating under a permit, you must carry the permit.

Notices and permits may also require you to carry or comply with other documents.

What happens if I don't carry the relevant notice, permit or other document?

Notice - if you cannot produce a notice that must be carried to an authorised officer, providing all conditions of the relevant notice are complied with, you may still receive the benefit of the notice.

Permit and other documents - if you cannot produce specific documents, such as a permit or accreditation documents,

to an authorised officer and eligibility to operate under the specific document cannot be confirmed, you will not receive the benefit of the exemption or concession.

There are offences under the HVNL for not keeping required documents in a driver's possession.

For more information

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