

Information on general access for PBS Level 1 heavy vehicles operating at General Mass Limits

Summary

The Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) was amended to give **general access to certain heavy vehicles approved as Level 1** under the Performance Based Standards (PBS) scheme, when **operating at General Mass Limits (GML)**.

General access from 1 October 2018

From 1 October 2018, PBS Level 1 heavy vehicles can operate with general access when loaded under GML—on condition that the vehicle:

- does not exceed the mass limits applying under GML
- has been formally approved under PBS at Level 1
- complies with all Level 1 conditions of its PBS vehicle approval
- is no longer than 20 metres
- is not a bus, B-double or road train.

If any mass limit in the PBS vehicle approval is different from one applying under GML, the vehicle must comply with the lower of the two.

Meaning of General Mass Limits

GMLs are defined in the HVNL and include:

- axle and axle group mass limits (Table 1)
- total vehicle and combination mass limits (Table 2)
- axle mass spacing limits
- towed mass ratio limits.

Table 1: GML axle and axle group mass limits

Axle or axle group type		Total Mass (GML)
Tri-axle or Quad-axle group		20.0t
Tandem-axle group		16.5t
Single axle		9.0t
Single steer axle	Complying	6.5t
	Other	6.0t
Twin-steer axle group	Load sharing	11.0t
	Non-load sharing	10.0t

Table 2: Maximum combination mass limits for vehicles operating at GML

Combination type	Total Mass (GML)
Twin-steer prime mover towing a tri-axle semi-trailer	46.5t
Other combination types with a complying (6.5t) steer axle	43.0t
Other combination types with a 6.0t steer axle	42.5t

No increases to GML allowed

GML excludes the mass exceptions:

- concessional mass limits (CML)
- quad axle mass exception limits
- higher mass limits (HML)
- one tonne triaxle mass transfer allowance.

A heavy vehicle operating under any of the 4 mass exceptions is not operating at GML and does not qualify for general access under this arrangement.

Axle mass spacing limits

These requirements limit axle masses by the distance between axle groups. These limits under GML are similar to those applying under the PBS Vehicle and Design Approval (PBS Approval). If a heavy vehicle complies with those under its PBS Approval at 'full' PBS masses, it will most likely comply with those under GML.

Towed mass ratio limits apply

Under GML, the mass of a dog or pig trailer must not be greater than its towing vehicle. This towed mass ratio is typically not applied while being operated at 'full' PBS masses and under the vehicle's PBS Approval. But they must be complied with when operating at GML and general access.

More information on mass limits

More information on mass limits is in a fact sheet:

National heavy vehicle mass and dimension limits

<https://www.nhvr.gov.au/files/201607-0116-mass-and-dimension-limits.pdf>

Two access modes

A PBS Level 1 heavy vehicle may alternate between two access modes, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The two access modes for PBS Level 1 heavy vehicles

Access mode:	Access mode 1: Full PBS mass limits	Access mode 2: Reduced masses (GML)
Road access:	As authorised under Notice or Permit	General access
Mass limits:	As prescribed in PBS Vehicle and Design Approval (e.g. 50.5t)	GML (e.g. 42.5t)
Dimension limits:	As per PBS Approval	As per PBS Approval + no longer than 20m

PBS operating conditions must be met

An operator must meet all of the Level 1 conditions of their vehicle's PBS Approval. These apply whether operating under either access mode.

Dimension limits

A PBS Approval will specify the vehicle's dimension limits. An additional dimension limit while operating with general access is that the vehicle's total length must not exceed 20.0m.

Other dimensions, such as for height and width, are limited by the PBS Approval. These may exceed those for prescriptive, non-PBS vehicles (e.g. above 4.3m height or 2.5m width).

While operators may have general access for vehicles above and below 4.3m height, they are always responsible for ensuring there is sufficient overhead clearance on any route they plan to travel.

Summary checklist

Table 4 shows a summary checklist of the conditions as described in this information sheet and as they apply to each access mode.

Table 4: Summary of conditions and associated road access

Applicable conditions	Access mode 1: Full PBS mass limits	Access mode 2: Reduced masses (GML)
Vehicle conditions:		
PBS approval inc. operating conditions	✓	✓
Is <u>not</u> a bus, B-double or road train?	n/a	✓
Mass limits:		
Complies with GML?	n/a	The lower of both applies
Loaded to masses in PBS approval	✓	
Dimension limits:		
As per PBS Approval	✓	✓
No longer than 20m?	n/a	✓

Example: A truck and dog trailer is approved to operate at Level 1 PBS, at up to 50.5 tonnes. It must be operated only on roads authorised under its Permit.

When at a reduced mass of 43.0 tonnes that meets the GMLs, the same heavy vehicle may operate with general access.

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