

Information Sheet – Operating a 4.6m high heavy vehicle as a specified semitrailer and under other notices

Purpose

This information sheet outlines access requirements for operating a heavy vehicle at up to 4.6m high.

The sheet was developed following the amendment of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) to allow for the operation of specified semitrailers to a maximum height of 4.6m.

A specified semitrailer may operate at up to 4.6m high—subject to conditions. This information sheet explains the conditions of their operation. It compares them with other access options for operating at up to 4.6m high.

You may also read a briefer, [summary information sheet on specified semitrailers](#).

Key changes

The inclusion of specified semitrailers under the HVNL from 28 February 2020 provides an additional option for operators seeking road access with heavy vehicles up to 4.6m high.

A key difference from some of the existing access options is operating a specified semitrailer is not restricted to specific freight tasks (e.g. livestock, vehicles, fodder, etc.).

Conditions for operating specified semitrailers up to 4.6m high

A specified semitrailer must:

- be no greater than 4.6m high
- be a semitrailer forming part of a:
 - prime mover towing a single semitrailer



- B-double



- B-triple



- not be a PBS vehicle
- be equipped with an air suspension system and effective dampers
- have a deck height up to 1.2m for at least 50% of its deck length
- operate at no greater than 90% of its applicable total combination mass limit.

The 90% mass restriction does not apply to:

- mass limits for axles and axle groups
- mass limits relating to spacing between axle groups.

Note that a specified semitrailer may need to operate below these mass limits, to comply with the 90% combination mass restriction.

A specified semitrailer may be loaded up to 4.6m high (i.e. any loads are not limited to its height by construction). For example, a 1.2m-high flat-bed semitrailer may be loaded up to 4.6m high—subject to meeting all specified semitrailer conditions and all other requirements, such as its load being properly restrained.

Applicable mass limits for specified semitrailers

A combination that includes a specified semitrailer(s) may operate under (one of):

- General Mass Limits (GML)
- Concessional Mass Limits (CML)
- Higher Mass Limits (HML).

For example, a specified semitrailer combination may operate under CML, with a combination mass limit that would otherwise be 44 tonnes. Operating with a specified semitrailer, the combination must operate at a maximum mass calculated as:

90% of 44 tonne, being 39.6 tonne.

Only the specified trailer(s) that forms part of a combination may operate at 4.6m high.

The prime mover and other ‘normal’ semitrailers must not exceed 4.3m high.

No additional road access restrictions

No additional road access restrictions are applied to a specified semitrailer:

- if it was otherwise operating with general access (i.e. as a prime mover towing a single semitrailer), that continues to be the case;
- if it was operating on an approved route (i.e. under notice or permit as a B-double or B-triple), then those route restrictions continue to apply.

Not all semitrailers in a combination need be specified semitrailers

Not all semitrailers in a B-double or B-triple need be specified semitrailers. It is permissible for some trailers in the same combination to operate as specified semitrailers (up to 4.6m high), while others are not (up to 4.3m high).

In this instance:

- Only the specified semitrailers must comply with the conditions for operating as a specified semitrailer.
- However, for any trailer in the combination to operate as a specified semitrailer, the total combination mass, including the other 'normal' semitrailers, must be no greater than 90% of the otherwise applicable combination mass limit. This may necessitate reducing operating masses on trailers other than the specified semitrailer(s).
- The deck length of each relevant specified semitrailer must be measured (50% of which must have a height no greater than 1.2m). The deck lengths of other vehicles in the combination need not be counted or, if they are specified semitrailers themselves, must be measured individually.

Operating under a permit or notice

If a combination operating under a notice or a permit includes a specified semitrailer, it must comply with both the specified semitrailer requirements and the notice or permit conditions.

General principles for determining mass and dimension limits when operating as a specified semitrailer under notice or permit are:

- Mass and dimension limits (e.g. total combination length, or total mass, or an axle mass limit) prescribed in the *Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation* (MDL Regulation) apply unless substitute limits are set in the notice or permit.
- MDL Regulation limits include the 4.6m height limit for a specified semitrailer.
- Any mass and dimension limits set by the notice or permit cannot be exceeded.

Examples of determining applicable mass and dimension limits

Example A: [The national B-double notice](#) sets a mass limit for 19m-long B-doubles at 50.0t, which is less than the MDL Regulation mass limit of 55.5t. The combination cannot exceed 50.0t while operating under the notice. The maximum mass for the B-double combination (i.e. 90% of the combination mass) is **49.95t if it contains a specified semitrailer**.

Example B: A permit sets a mass limit for the same B-double combination at 65.0t. (This is a Class 3 permit as the mass is above the MDL Regulation mass limit of 62.5t). The mass limit when operating with a specified semitrailer in the combination is the same as for Example A (i.e. 56.25t). This is because the mass limit for the combination is determined at 90% of the MDL Regulation limit.

Table 1. Examples of how mass and dimension limits apply to specified semi-trailers under notice

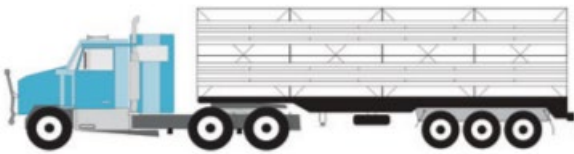
		Combination mass limit	
		Example A	Example B
MDL Regulation		55.5t	62.5t
Specified semi-trailer mass condition (90% of MDL)		49.95t	56.25t
Notice or permit type		Class 2	Class 3
Notice or permit condition		50.0t	65.0t
Applicable mass limit	While operating as a specified semitrailer	49.95t	56.25t
	While not operating as a specified semitrailer	50.0t	65.0t

Notices granting access at 4.6m high are unaffected by the specified semitrailer amendment

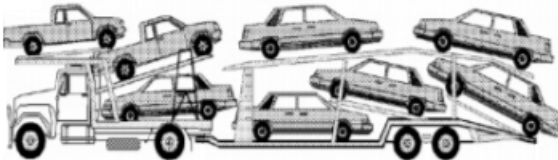
Various notices made under the HVNL already allow access for certain heavy vehicles at 4.6m high. Each of the notices applies different conditions and in different circumstances. Access conditions under each are unaffected by the specified semitrailer amendment.

The most common notices are for:

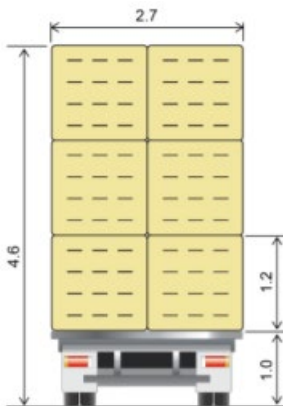
- livestock vehicles (i.e. built to carry cattle, horses, pigs or sheep)



- vehicle carriers (i.e. built with at least two decks)



- vehicles carrying baled hay and straw.¹



- vehicles operating under 4.6m height notices:
 - [New South Wales and Queensland Class 3 4.6m High Loaded Semi-trailer Dimension Exemption Notice 2022 \(No.1\)](#)
 - [Australian Capital Territory Class 3 4.6m High Vehicle Dimension Exemption Notice 2020 \(No.1\)](#)

- vehicles carrying high-cube containers:
 - [Tasmania Class 3 Heavy Vehicles Transporting High-Cube Freight Containers Dimension Exemption Notice 2019 \(No.1\)](#)
- various notices authorising the carrying of indivisible loads.

Selecting the most appropriate option

Table 2 on pages 4 and 5 compares requirements and allowances of different options for operating heavy vehicles at up to 4.6m high.

It includes requirements under various notices and for specified semitrailers. Each of the options makes different requirements and suits different operational needs.

Introducing specified semitrailers under the HVNL has increased and/or overlapped with the access provided by some notices in Table 2.

¹ See <https://www.nhvr.gov.au/files/201812-0974-info-sheet-operating-requirements-for-the-transport-of-baled-hay-and-straw.pdf>.

Table 2. Examples of how mass and dimension limits apply to specified semitrailers under notice

Authority to operate at up to 4.6m high	States and territories	Vehicle type	Road access	Freight type	Mass limit	Other
Specified semitrailer	ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC	Restricted to only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single semitrailers • B-doubles • B-triples 	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high).	Any	Restricted to 90% of applicable limits	Trailer deck height limit of 1.2m for at least 50% of the deck
Notices allowing any type of freight to be transported at 4.6m high						
4.6m height notice – NSW	NSW only	Restricted to only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single semitrailers • B-doubles • road trains 	Restricted to approved 4.6m routes and as per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high).		As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high)	
4.6m height notice - Queensland	QLD only	Restricted to only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single semitrailers • B-doubles 	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high).		Restricted to 90% of applicable limits	Trailer deck height limit of 1.2m for at least 50% of the deck
4.6m height notice - ACT	ACT only	Any and all vehicle types eligible to operate in the ACT	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high).	Any	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high)	
4.6m height by construction semitrailers - national notice ²	NSW, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC	Restricted to only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single semitrailers • B-doubles • B-triples (except in Queensland) 	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high). Also restricted to approved 4.6m routes in NSW only.		Restricted to 90% of applicable limits	Trailer deck height limited to 1.2m for at least 50% of the deck

² This notice predates and mostly reflects requirements for a specified semitrailer (i.e. equivalent or broader access is provided under specified semitrailer access conditions).

Authority to operate at up to 4.6m high	States and territories	Vehicle type	Road access	Freight type	Mass limit	Other
Notices allowing the transport of certain freight types at 4.6m high						
National Class 2 4.6m high and/or 25 m long Vehicle carrier notice		Vehicle carriers with dual loading decks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combinations up to 25m long truck-trailers single semitrailers B-doubles 	Varies by state, but mostly restricted to 25/26m B-double routes. In NSW only—also restricted to approved 4.6m routes	Vehicles only	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high)	
National Class 2 4.6m High livestock carrier notice	NSW, QLD, SA, TAS, VIC	Varies by state/territory and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rigid vehicles single semitrailers B-doubles road trains 	Varies by state/territory, mostly as per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high). Restricted also to livestock vehicle network in NSW.	Livestock only - cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and horses	As per state livestock mass exemptions	Trailer deck length limits Tare mass limits
Drought assistance - national notice (Link to info sheet)		Rigid vehicles Single semitrailers Low loaders B-doubles Road trains	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high). Limited to participating road manager's roads only.	Baled or rolled hay or straw		
Drought assistance - NSW notice (Link to operators guide)		Rigid vehicles Single semitrailers Low loaders B-doubles	Routes approved in the operator's guide .	Baled or rolled hay	As per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high).	
NSW Baled commodities Notice (Link to operators guide)	NSW	Rigid vehicles Single semitrailers Truck-trailers B-doubles Road trains	Restricted to approved 4.6m routes and as per relevant heavy vehicle type (when operating at up to 4.3m high). Additional route restrictions for truck-trailers.	Rectangular cotton bales produced at a cotton gin Baled or rolled hay or straw Baled wool		

Contact the NHVR

If operators have any further queries regarding the operation of specified semitrailers or operating up to 4.6m under a notice or permit, the NHVR may be contacted using the details below.

For more information:

Visit: www.nhvr.gov.au
 Subscribe: www.nhvr.gov.au/subscribe
 Email: info@nhvr.gov.au
 Phone: 13 NHVR* (13 64 87)

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