

Information sheet

Mass limits for eligible 2-axle buses under the Heavy Vehicle National Law

Purpose

The purpose of this information sheet is to describe the amendment to the *Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation* (the MDL) that introduces a category of 2-axle bus, an **Eligible 2-axle bus**, and provides those buses with an 18 tonnes mass limit.

Previously, the mass limit in the MDL for all 2-axle buses was 16 tonnes. In some jurisdictions, to reflect the increasing average weight of passengers, these buses were able to operate above 16 tonnes under a notice, but were subject to operating conditions that varied from state-to-state.

This adjusted mass limit has been transferred from the notice to the MDL to provide the mass limit that was available under the notice to all participating jurisdictions, under harmonised conditions.

This information sheet provides guidance to assist bus drivers and operators to comply with the adjusted mass limits and suggestions to streamline roadside interactions with Authorised Officers.

What is an Eligible 2-axle bus?

Eligible 2-axle bus means a bus with only 2 axles, one of which is a single-drive axle fitted with dual tyres, if the bus is—

- One (or more) of the following:
 - a complying bus;
 - an ultra-low floor bus;
 - a bus, other than an ultra-low floor bus, that is authorised to carry standing passengers;
 - a bus, other than an articulated bus, whose length is more than 12.5m but not more than 14.5 m, and
- is equipped with certain additional safety features.

Note: Eligible 2-axle bus is defined in Part 1 section 3 of the MDL.

Additional safety features

To be classed as an Eligible 2-axle bus and operate at the adjusted mass limits, the bus must be equipped with the following additional safety features:

For a bus manufactured before 1 January 2016

Must be fitted with—

- a complying anti-lock braking system (ABS); or
- a vehicle stability function that complies with the version of UN ECE Regulation No. 13 that applied to the bus at the bus' date of manufacture or a later version of UN ECE Regulation No. 13.

For a bus manufactured on or after 1 January 2016

Must be fitted with—

- a complying ABS; and
- either —
 - an electronic braking system (EBS); or
 - a vehicle stability function that complies with the version of UNECE Regulation No. 13 that applied to the bus at the bus's date of manufacture or a later version of UN ECE Regulation No. 13.

Note: The requirements for ABS can be found in Australian Design Rule 35.

Note: A vehicle stability function is more commonly known as electronic stability control (ESC).

Compliance with additional safety requirements

When operating an Eligible 2-axle bus the NHVR recommends drivers carry some form of documentation to demonstrate to Authorised Officers that the bus is equipped with the required additional safety features. Providing this information to Authorised Officers at the roadside will streamline and expedite the intercept process.

Such documentation may be:

- a modification certificate, issued by an Approved Vehicle Examiner, verifying modifications that have been performed to fit the additional safety features; or
- a letter from the vehicle's manufacturer that identifies the VIN and a description of the vehicle (year, make and model) and confirming the additional safety features the vehicle was manufactured with.

Mass limits

The mass limits for an **Eligible 2-axle bus** are:

Variable	Maximum limit (tonnes)
Steer axle	7.0
Drive axle	12.0
Gross Vehicle Mass	18.0

Note: Single drive axle group must be fitted with dual tyres with appropriate load rating.
Sum of axles must not exceed maximum allowable Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) limit.



	Steer	Drive	Gross
Allowable Mass Limits for Eligible 2-Axle Buses	7.0t	12.0t	18.0t
Examples	Steer	Drive	Gross
✗ Example A - actual mass	6.5t	11.9t	18.4t
✗ Example B - actual mass	5.6t	12.2	17.8
✗ Example C - actual mass	7.0t	12.0t	19.0t
✓ Example D - actual mass	6.0t	12.0t	18.0t

Example A - The steer and drive axle mass are within allowable limits, however the vehicles Gross Mass has exceed the 18.0t allowable limit by 0.4 tonne

Example B - The steer axle is within allowable mass limits, the drive axle has exceed the 12.0t limit by 0.2tonne. The vehicles Gross mass is within allowable limits

Example C - The steer and drive axle mass are within allowable limits, however the vehicles GVM has exceed the 18.0t allowable limit by 1.0 tonne

Example D - The steer and drive axle mass and Gross mass are within allowable limits

Figure 1 – Bus operating as Eligible 2-axle bus

Occupant capacity

Over time, the mass of passengers has increased, but the mass limit for buses has not. This has meant that for bus operators to comply with their mass limits, they were required to carry fewer passengers which reduced the efficiency of passenger transport services.

This new category of bus will ensure productivity levels are maintained while improving the safety of commercial passenger vehicles.

Driver responsibilities

Before starting and throughout a journey, drivers must:

- ensure that the vehicle they are driving complies with the relevant HVNL requirements
- be aware of their responsibilities in regard to the safe operation of the vehicle.

Operator responsibilities

Operators should ensure that:

- they have business practices or systems in place to ensure that the vehicle complies with the relevant HVNL requirements, such as vehicle standards, maintenance and mass and dimension requirements
- the driver is provided with any appropriate documents required to operate the heavy vehicle in compliance with the HVNL
- the driver is aware of their responsibilities in regard to the safe operation of the vehicle

Chain of Responsibility (CoR)

Parties in the Chain of Responsibility who have control or influence over transport activities have a duty to ensure that heavy vehicles, including buses, are used safely on the road.

This obligation – known as safety duties – requires risk management to identify and reduce or eliminate risks to safety. Safety is broadly defined and includes protection of road infrastructure by compliance with mass limits. It also includes safety of passengers and other road users.

Bus operators, as parties in the CoR, must ensure they have systems or processes in place to manage and control the weight carried by buses, including passengers, luggage and any other freight.

More information can be found at www.nhvr.gov.au/cor

It is important to note:

- The mass limits for Eligible 2-axle buses are not intended to increase the existing passenger carrying capacity.
- Regardless of the passenger carrying capacity of the bus, the prescribed mass limits in the MDL must not be exceeded.
- The [Victorian Class 3 2-Axle Bus Mass Exemption Notice](#) exempts 2-axle buses in Victoria manufactured before **1 January 2019** to operate without additional safety features as per the MDL.

For more information:

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