

# **HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW (HVNL) IMPLEMENTATION**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

# Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) Implementation – FAQs

## What is the HVNL reform project?

A review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL), led by the National Transport Commission (NTC), commenced in 2019 and aimed to update the existing law to improve safety and productivity for the heavy vehicle sector. The review led to a series of reform options being identified that could improve the effectiveness of the HVNL by looking for new ways to achieve similar regulatory objectives.

The NHVR has been an active participant in the review process, providing unique insights to the reform of the law, based on direct, long-term and daily engagement with the heavy vehicle industry, jurisdictions, policing agencies and the supply chain. The review produced the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025 and the Heavy Vehicle National Amendment Regulations 2025 (together, the 2025 Amendment Package) which was introduced into Queensland Parliament on 26 August 2025.

## When do the changes come into effect?

The 2025 Amendment Package passed through Queensland Parliament without amendment on 18 November 2025, representing a significant milestone in progressing this important reform.

Some elements of the Mass, Dimension and Loading Regulation amendments will be formally approved at a later date.

The amended HVNL is expected to commence in mid-2026.

## What's changing?

Significant changes to the law include:

- The introduction of new two-tiered accreditation system including a General Safety Accreditation and an Alternative Compliance Accreditation regime. This new framework will operate alongside the current NHVAS, allowing accredited operators up to three years to transition.
- Changes to prescribed general access mass and length limits.
- A new duty to not drive a vehicle whilst 'unfit to drive.'
- Changes to more than 70 penalties.

## Who is leading this reform?

The NTC led the HVNL Review and is responsible for developing the reforms, with input from industry, jurisdictions and the NHVR.

The NHVR is responsible for implementing and administering the amended law.

## What are the key benefits of the reform?

1. Improved fatigue and fitness to drive management
2. Enhanced vehicle access
3. Strengthened accreditation systems
4. Greater regulatory flexibility

## 5. Streamlined governance

### **Will the changes apply in all states and territories?**

The HVNL will apply in all states and territories, except for Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

### **Is there somewhere available now where I can read the new legislation?**

You can read more [here](#).

### **What is the purpose of the reforms?**

The reforms are designed to improve safety, increase productivity and efficiency, and create conditions for greater use of innovation and technology in day-to-day operations. The reforms mark another step towards a safer, more productive industry.

### **What is the NHVR doing to prepare for the introduction of the new law?**

The NHVR is actively preparing to implement the reformed HVNL and is working closely with the NTC, state and territory governments, and industry stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition. This includes:

- Updating systems, procedures, and staff training
- Supporting industry with clear guidance and education
- Enhancing digital tools

We'll continue to provide updates and support to help industry prepare and comply confidently.

### **When can I expect to hear more?**

The NHVR will ensure you are kept informed on how these changes may impact your operations. Expect to receive more information through the NHVR's various industry channels including on our website, in our On the Road newsletter, through our Stakeholder Engagement team and our social media platforms in the coming months.

### **Will there be a grace period for industry, when it comes to issuing penalties?**

No, there will not be a grace period once the new law takes effect in mid-2026.

The NHVR will provide comprehensive training, education, and awareness activities well ahead of this date to ensure industry has sufficient time to understand the changes and meet their compliance obligations.

### **Who can I contact for further information?**

You can contact the NHVR Contact Centre by calling 13 64 87 (13 NHVR) or emailing [info@nhvr.gov.au](mailto:info@nhvr.gov.au).

You can also find further information on the [NTC website](#).

### **What is happening to the NHVAS?**

The amended HVNL introduces a new two-tiered accreditation framework comprising of General Safety Accreditation (GSA) and Alternative Compliance Accreditation (ACA). It's important to note that the existing National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme (NHVAS) will continue to operate during a transition period.

The new accreditation framework embeds the Safety Management System (SMS) requirement directly into the application and audit process, supported by a National Audit Standard (NAS). This provides a fair, consistent and contemporary approach to auditing across all jurisdictions.

Operators currently accredited in the NHVAS will have up to three years to transition to the new scheme. The NHVR will be in touch with accredited operators closer to the commencement date with more detail on this.

### **I am in NHVAS, do I need to do anything with my accreditation before mid-2026?**

No action is required at this stage. NHVAS accredited operators will have up to three years to transition to the new accreditation framework. The NHVR is developing an implementation plan to manage NHVAS operators whose accreditation is due to expire shortly after the amended law commences. Further details will be communicated directly to affected operators early in the New Year.

### **What are the benefits of the new accreditation scheme?**

The new scheme aims to simplify the accreditation process for operators and allow for more tailored accreditation solutions, making it easier to understand, access and maintain, while still upholding the highest safety standards. The changes aim to strengthen the accreditation system and improve safety outcomes overall.

### **How does the new *Unfit to Drive* duty differ to the current duty to not drive fatigued?**

Within the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2025 (QLD) is a new duty on the driver to be '*fit to drive*', which expands upon the existing duty for drivers not to drive while impaired by fatigue (existing section 228 of the HVNL). This new duty applies to all drivers of heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, not just those operating fatigue regulated vehicles over 12 tonnes.

The requirement to carry and complete work diaries, including recording work and rest hours, will not be extended to heavy vehicles under 12 tonnes. It is only the new unfit to drive duty that will extend to all heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes.

### **What does the *Unfit to Drive* duty mean?**

This expanded duty covers a broader range of situations such as physical and psychological ailments and injuries. It means heavy vehicle drivers are enabled to manage their health and fitness and empowers them to cease driving if they are unfit to drive for any reason.

Currently the "not to drive if unfit" duty is limited to unfit to drive due to fatigue. The amended law will expand this to any reason the driver believes they are unfit to drive, from temporal medical issues such as a migraine to being unfit to drive due to mental illness. Likewise, and consistent with Work Health and Safety laws, it notifies parties in the Chain of Responsibility

that they must ensure their conduct and business practices do not cause or encourage the driver to drive whilst fatigued or unfit.

### **What are the benefits of the new *Unfit to Drive* duty?**

The duty aims to reduce risks to public, environmental and infrastructure safety, and empowers drivers to cease driving if they are unfit for any reason. It is a proactive and preventative approach to managing health and fitness, reflecting the shared responsibility that exists between drivers and operators in reducing the risk of incidents and fatalities on our roads.

### **How will industry be supported in complying with new *Unfit to Drive* duty?**

The NHVR aims to take proactive educational approach to ensuring drivers are aware of their obligations under the HVNL and know how to manage their fitness to drive.

The NHVR is developing a suite of guidance materials to help drivers understand the new requirements of the law which is intended to be made widely available across the industry. The NHVR also provides guidance and advice to operators and employers of heavy vehicle drivers around their primary duty obligations to ensure that drivers are fit to drive prior to and through a journey, by way of Regulatory Advice and Industry Codes of Practice.

The NHVR is committed to keeping industry informed as we prepare to seamlessly implement the amended law.

### **Are there changes to penalties as part of the reformed HVNL?**

The reforms aim to simplify record-keeping requirements and reduce penalties for minor or unintentional administrative errors.

This reflects a shift toward focusing on genuine safety risks. There will be a shift in 71 penalty costs, with 21 of them reducing in price.

### **What are the changes to Mass, Dimension and Loading?**

The HVNL reforms will see changes to prescribed general access mass and length limits.

While many of the policy changes approved by Ministers were incorporated into the 2025 Amendment Package, some productivity-related MDL reforms must be implemented through amendments to the MDL Regulation.

The NTC has now turned these policy settings into the draft Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation Amendment (draft MDL Regulation Amendment) which has been released for consultation. The consultation period closes on Monday, 19 January 2026.

The proposed changes will:

- Increase General Mass Limits (GML) to the limits that currently apply under Concessional Mass Limits (CML).
- Expand Euro VI concessions to road trains.
- Increase the length limit for vehicles from 19 metres to 20 metres.
  - NOTE: B-Doubles will not be part of current regulations but will be considered as part of future regulatory amendments.

- Amend the tow mass ratio and associated conditions for tag trailers.

Changes to prescribed general access height from 4.3 metres to 4.6 metres won't be included in the changes to come into effect mid-2026. This change will be considered as part of future regulatory amendments.

These changes are still subject to ministerial approval.

Until the new legislation and regulations come into effect, the existing mass, dimension and loading rules remain.

**What is the underlying reason behind the increased length, height, and weight changes?**

The changes aim to improve freight productivity, reduce costs and better reflect the real-world capabilities of modern heavy vehicles – all while maintaining safety.

Operators and key industry associations have consistently supported higher mass limits that align with what vehicles are already permitted to carry under existing permits and notices. This strong industry demand has been a key driver of the reforms.

There has also been support for allowing longer vehicle combinations, particularly where it can reduce trip numbers, improve efficiency, and deliver environmental benefits through fewer vehicle movements.