

Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV)

What is a SPV?

A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) is defined as a motor vehicle or trailer, other than an agricultural vehicle or a tow truck, built for a purpose other than carrying goods such as a mobile crane, a concrete pump or drill rig.

A SPV that does exceed one or more of the general mass and dimension limits set out in the *Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation* is then considered a Class 1 restricted access heavy vehicle.

Operators still need to comply with the operating conditions specified in their relevant transition notice or guideline. A Class 1 SPV will not require a permit to operate provided the movement of the vehicle complies with all of the requirements and travel conditions outlined in the gazette notice or guideline.

If a Class 1 SPV does not comply with the mass or dimension limits set out in a transition notice, an operator must apply to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to obtain a mass or dimension exemption permit.

The driver of a Class 1 SPV must have the appropriate driver licence to operate the vehicle. Please ensure you contact your relevant driver licensing authority in the state or territory for licensing requirements.

Exemption under Mass or Dimension Exemption Gazette Notice

The NHVR may grant a Mass or Dimension Exemption Gazette Notice for a period of not more than five years to a Class 1 SPV from a prescribed mass or dimension requirement.

A Mass or Dimension Exemption Gazette Notice will include the following information:

- › the category of heavy vehicles to which the exemption applies
- › the mass or dimension requirements
- › the areas or routes to which the exemption applies
- › the road conditions or travel conditions required by the relevant road manager/s
- › the period for which the exemption applies.

Operators can continue to operate under a current transition gazette notice. If the vehicle exceeds the requirements of the gazette you can apply to the NHVR to obtain a Mass or Dimension Exemption Permit.

What if I currently operate under a gazette notice or guideline?

Gazette notices or guidelines specific to the movement of oversize or overmass SPVs will be consolidated into a national gazette notice. The transition notices that are currently in force will continue to apply in each state and territory until a national notice is released.

▼ Some mobile cranes have heavier axle weights than the general truck mass limits



▼ Some fire trucks have higher axle weights than general freight vehicles to carry the equipment to effectively fight fires



Exemptions by permit

The NHVR may grant a Mass or Dimension Exemption Permit for a period of not more than three years. For access to the road network that is not covered under a transition notice an application to the NHVR will be required.

Will I have to apply for a permit again?

All permits that have already in force at the time the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) commenced continue to have effect as if they were made under the HVNL. They will remain current until their expiry date or they are replaced under the national access framework, whichever comes first.

All new and renewal permit applications now need to be directed to the NHVR.

Where the dimensions of the vehicle are likely to interfere with overhead wires, bridges and other structures on or beside the road, approval to travel the route must be sought from the relevant authorities. These third party approvals will be required prior to the issue of a permit. It is the responsibility of the operator of the oversize/overmass SPV to obtain approval from the relevant organisation. For further details regarding third party providers please see the Third party utility provider fact sheet.

The driver of a Class 1 heavy vehicle who is driving the vehicle under a Mass or Dimension Exemption Permit must keep a copy of the permit in the driver's possession.

What if my permit doesn't have an expiry date?

In almost all cases, permits should have an expiry date attached to them. Some older permits which were issued in perpetuity continue to exist. In this small number of cases, the permits will continue under the HVNL for three years. At the end of the three year period, the permit will lapse and you must apply to the NHVR if you want the permit to be reissued.

Warning devices

In some instances SPVs may require conditions of operations such as warning devices or warning lights to operate on the road network. If operating under a transition notice or a permit, these requirements will be specified in detail. The following provides an example of some of the warning devices that may apply to an SPV.

Rear marking plates

A red and yellow rear marking plate, complying with Standards Bulletin VSB12 – Rear Marking Plates, must be fitted to the rearmost part of the body of a SPV. A copy of the bulletin may be obtained from the website of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Transport at www.infrastructure.gov.au.

Warning patterns

A warning pattern must be displayed on the left and right sides of any rigid projection extending more than 1.2 metres in front of the body of a SPV. A warning pattern consists of diagonal stripes at least 150mm wide and alternatively coloured either red and white or black and white. The warning pattern must cover an area of at least 0.16m².

Side lights

When travelling at night, a SPV with a projection extending more than 1.2 metres in front of the vehicle must have a yellow light fixed on each side of the projection.

The light must be –

- › fixed as far forward as possible, and shielded from the driver's view
- › visible to any traffic approaching the vehicle from its front
- › visible to any traffic approaching the vehicle from the side on which it is fixed.

Oversize sign

The warning sign on a SPV must be at least 1200mm long and at least 450mm high. The length of the sign may be split in two parts, in which case the combined length of its parts must be at least 1200mm.

A warning sign on SPV must have a face showing:

- › the word **OVERSIZE**, in black capital letters and in typeface Series C(N) complying with AS 1744 Forms of Letters and Numerals for Road Signs

Note – AS 1744 Forms of Letters and Numerals for Road Signs may be purchased from Standards Australia at www.standards.org.au.

- › the letters must be at least 200mm high and at least 125mm from the top and bottom of the warning sign.

If the length of the warning sign is split into two parts:

- › the word **OVER** must be on the left part and the word **SIZE** on the right part
- › there must be no border between the two parts
- › both parts must be mounted at the same height.

A warning sign on a SPV must be fitted horizontally.
The lower edge of the warning sign must be:

- › above the bottom bumper bar, or
- › if there is no bumper bar, at least 500mm above ground level.

The face of a warning sign on a Class 1 SPV must have:

- › a yellow surface complying with Class 1 or 2 of AS 1906 'Retro-reflective Materials and Devices for Road Traffic Control Purposes'
- › a black border that is at least 20mm wide and, unless the sign is made with a box edge, whose outermost edge is at least 10mm in from the edge of the sign
- › its manufacturer's name or trademark, and the brand and class of material used for the warning sign's surface, permanently marked in letters at least 3mm but no more than 10mm high on any visible part of the sign.

A warning sign on a SPV must be made of stiff, flat, weatherproof material for example:

- › zincalume that is at least 0.8mm thick
- › aluminium that is at least 1.6mm thick

However it may be made of flexible, weatherproof material if the sign is:

- › held taut
- › clearly visible
- › unlikely to become dislocated, furl or otherwise difficult to be read by other road users



Example of a warning sign for an oversize vehicle or combination

Other requirements

No towing other vehicles

A SPV must not tow a vehicle. However, Section 33 of the Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation provides an exemption under a permit to allow a crane to tow a single trailer if:

- › the crane has more than 5 axles
- › the load on the trailer includes only equipment required for the normal operation of the crane
- › the swept path of the combination consisting of the crane and trailer turning a corner is not greater than what the swept path of the crane alone turning a corner would be.

About the NHVR

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) is Australia's dedicated independent regulator for heavy vehicles over 4.5 tonnes gross vehicle mass.

The NHVR was created to administer one set of rules for heavy vehicles under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL), improve safety and productivity, minimise the compliance burden on the heavy vehicle transport industry and reduce duplication and inconsistencies across state and territory borders.

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