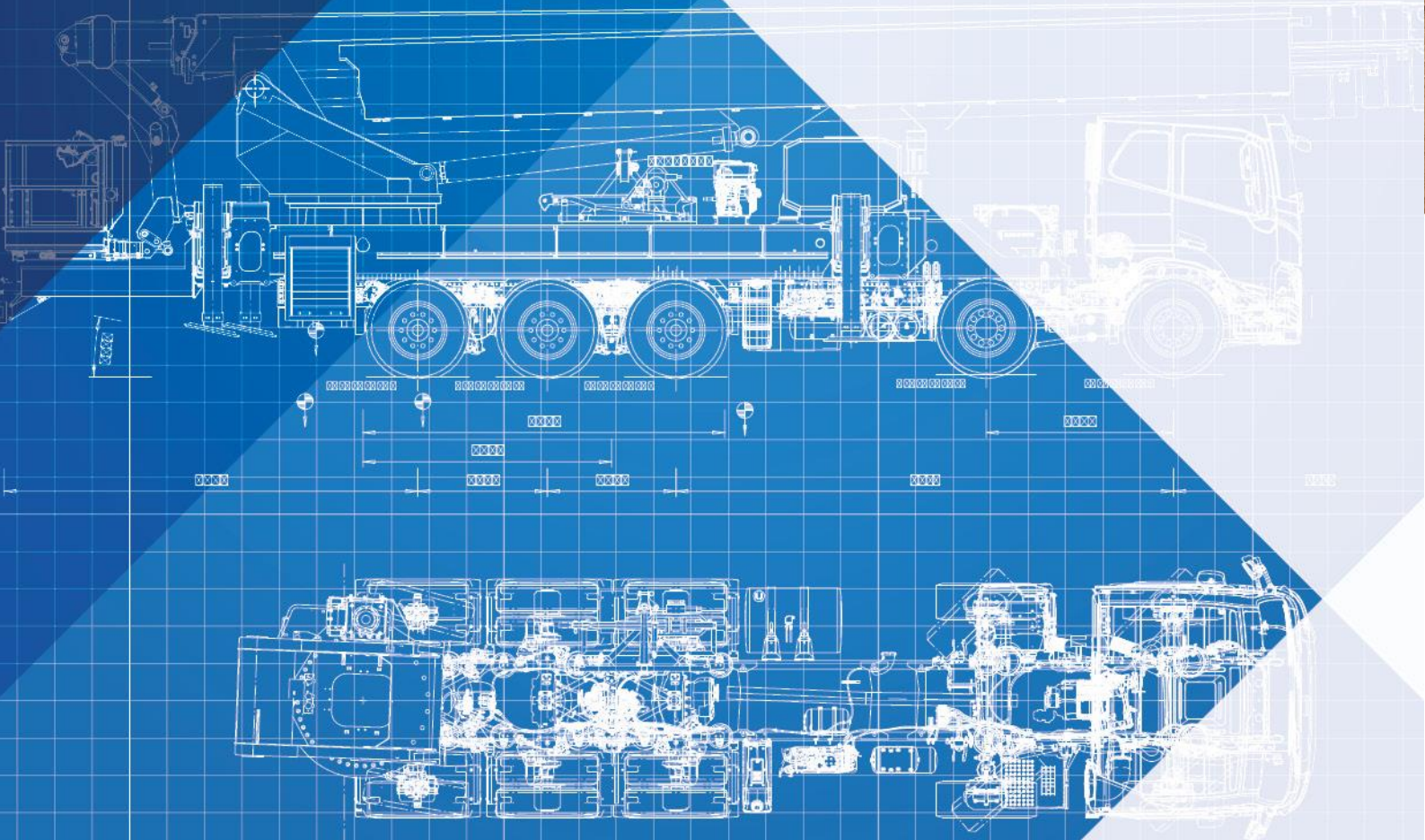


VEHICLE STANDARDS

Industry Guide to
In-principle Support

NOVEMBER 2022



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1. About this guide

This guide provides general information and advice for the heavy vehicle industry about gaining In-principle Support (IPS) for the registration and use of non-standard road vehicles.

Non-standard road vehicles are vehicles that, due to customisation to perform a specific task, are unable to comply with the Vehicle Standards.

The guide serves as a general introduction to what Vehicle Standards are, and the Departments responsible for administering them. It explains what an IPS is, which vehicles may require IPS, how to apply for IPS and other information relevant to the process.

2. About Vehicle Standards

Vehicles are required to meet a minimum set of requirements, or standards, to be allowed to be used on a road in Australia. These standards are designed to focus on three critical areas, which are safety, security and emissions.

The responsibility for applying the rules about heavy vehicles, including the Vehicle Standards, is shared between the following three areas of government:

- The rules that apply before a vehicle is provided to a consumer for the first time are administered by the Federal transport authority. At time of publication this was the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Federal Department)
- The rules that apply after a vehicle is provided to a consumer for the first time (in-service) are administered by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.
- The rules that apply to registering a vehicle are administered by State and Territory transport authorities.

Owners and operators of vehicles that do not meet the Vehicle Standards must obtain an exemption from the requirements before the vehicle can be used on a road.

The IPS process is used to advise whether a vehicle will be eligible for the necessary permissions before the vehicle is imported or built.

Federal transport authority

The Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (the Federal Department) is responsible for administering the *Road Vehicle Standards Act 2018* (RVSA) and for maintaining the Register of Approved Vehicles (RAV).

Note: From 1 July 2021, the RVSA replaced the *Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989*.

The RVSA sets the rules and standards that apply to both heavy and light road vehicles up to the point they are provided to a consumer for the first time in Australia. These rules include the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) which are designed to ensure vehicles are safe to use, control emissions, secure vehicle against theft, and promote the saving of energy.

The Federal Department assesses compliance with the ADRs and issues an approval for the vehicle to be imported or built.

Vehicles that have approval from the Federal Department will either be fitted with a compliance plate or be entered on the Register of Approved Vehicles (RAV).

The Federal Department is also responsible for issuing:

- approvals for vehicles to be entered onto the RAV
- exemptions from ADRs (pre-in-service)
- import approvals

Vehicles that cannot meet the standards but still require access to the road network, are considered to be non-standard road vehicles and may be subject to additional requirements.

These additional requirements may involve an importer or vehicle builder seeking advice of IPS from the NHVR.

Note: The NHVR can only issue support for the use of the vehicle in participating jurisdictions. Vehicles that are to be used in a non-participating jurisdiction, need to apply for IPS from the road transport authority in the appropriate State or Territory.

NHVR vehicle standards

The NHVR is responsible for administering the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* (HVNL) and associated regulations, including the *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) National Regulation* (the Regulation). These rules are applicable in participating jurisdictions (ACT, NSW, Qld SA, Tas and Vic) and include requirements for vehicles to continue to comply with the ADRs.

Heavy vehicle operators, owners, and modifiers may apply to the NHVR Vehicle Standards team for:

- in-principle support for non-standard road vehicles
- exemption from compliance with one or more heavy vehicle standard
- approval to carry out a complex modification to a heavy vehicle

State, Territory, and local transport authorities

Each State and Territory in Australia has a Department that is responsible for the use of vehicles on roads, this includes requirements for registering vehicles.

The transport authority is normally also the ‘Road Manager’ for state-owned roads such as freeways, highways, arterial roads and is usually also a Road Manager.

Road Managers also include Local Government Areas (LGAs), and any other road owners, such as ports, or forestry agencies. Road managers are responsible for granting access to specific roads on their network and should be consulted before the vehicle is used on a road.

When an application for IPS is made, the NHVR will liaise with the State or Territory transport authority regarding the vehicle’s eligibility for registration and provisional or indicative access to the road network.

3. What is In-principle Support

In-principle support or IPS, is written administrative advice provided by the NHVR about whether a non-standard road vehicle is likely to be allowed to be used on a road.

The NHVR issues IPS to provide guidance about whether a proposed design of a non-standard road vehicle:

- will be eligible for any necessary exemptions,
- will gain road access, and
- can be registered in the nominated jurisdiction.

An IPS may be required before the vehicle can be built, modified, or imported into Australia and will advise if the vehicle would require an exemption from the Vehicle Standards.

Note: An IPS is not a *vehicle standards exemption permit*. Vehicles that have been issued IPS may require further permissions before accessing the road network. For more information on Vehicle Standards exemption permits see [page eleven of this document](#).

Benefits of gaining IPS

Gaining IPS before a non-standard road vehicle is built, modified, or imported into Australia creates an opportunity to identify any conditions or requirements that may be imposed on the proposed vehicle.

Knowing what the conditions and requirements for the completed vehicle allows the Customer to consider them and incorporate as necessary during the build or modification.

4. Vehicles that require IPS

An application for IPS may be required for certain types of heavy vehicles that do not comply with one or more of the Vehicle Standards.

Road vehicles that are built or designed to perform a specific task may require special fittings or equipment causing non-compliance with the Vehicle Standards.

The most common types of non-standard road vehicles are those that are oversized by construction and special purpose vehicles (SPVs).

Note: While *SPV* is a commonly used term, a vehicle considered to be an *SPV* by the Federal Department may not be eligible to operate under certain *SPV* concessions administered by the NHVR.

Types of non-standard road vehicles

Non-standard road vehicles may require exemption from some of the Vehicle Standards in addition to special permission to access the road network.

Examples of non-standard road vehicles include:

- Mobile cranes (e.g., Figures 1, 2 and 3)
- Elevated work platforms (EWP) (e.g., Figure 4)
- Concrete pumps (e.g., Figure 5)
- Drill Rigs (e.g., Figure 6)
- SPV Trailers (e.g., Figure 7)
- Oversize trailers (e.g., Figure 8)



Figure 1: All Terrain Mobile Crane 4 axle



Figure 2: All Terrain Mobile Crane 5 axle and Boom Support Dolly 3 axle

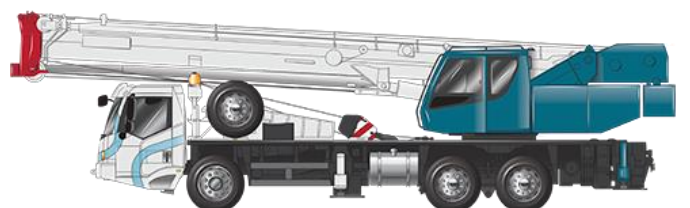


Figure 3: Mobile Crane 3 axle



Figure 4: EWP 2 axle



Figure 5: Truck Mounted Concrete Pump 4 axle



Figure 6: Truck Mounted Drill Rig 5 axle

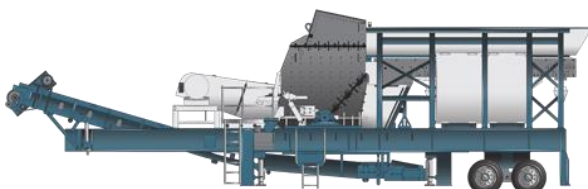


Figure 7: Concrete Plant Trailer 2 axle



Figure 8: Platform Trailer 7 axle

Vehicle origin

Non-standard road vehicles may be imported as a complete vehicle from another country, or they can be built or modified in Australia.

The country or region that a vehicle was originally built in is referred to as the vehicle origin. It is important to know the vehicle origin prior to applying for IPS as this can impact when an IPS application is required.

Generally, imported non-standard road vehicles will have demonstrated compliance with the local standards and requirements of the vehicle origin. The Federal

Department requires an IPS to be obtained before the vehicle can be approved to enter the country (import approval).

In some cases, the standards that apply in other countries are recognised in Australia. The ability to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the vehicle origin may simplify the process of demonstrating compliance with the Australian standards.

Vehicles built or modified in Australia should seek IPS before construction or modification of the vehicle commences.

Imported non-standard road vehicles

To import a heavy vehicle into Australia, prior approval must be granted by the Federal Department (Vehicle Import Approval).

The Federal Department website states that *it is an offence to import a road vehicle into Australia without approval. You must obtain approval to import your road vehicle before importing the vehicle.*

Generally, the Federal Department will require an IPS from the NHVR as a pre-requisite before issuing the Vehicle Import Approval for a non-standard road vehicle. The IPS may be issued for a completed vehicle or for the design of a proposed vehicle that has not yet been built.

Non-standard road vehicles built or modified in Australia

An IPS should be sought from the NHVR before building or modifying a vehicle that will be a non-standard road vehicle.

Non-standard road vehicles that start as compliant motor vehicles but due to the necessary modifications and customisations, no longer comply with the Vehicle Standards are referred to as 'truck-based'. This is because the vehicle is based on a compliant truck design.

Truck-based non-standard road vehicles will have demonstrated compliance with many of the ADRs before the modifications are carried out and must be assessed for changes in compliance due to the modifications.

Non-standard road vehicles that are not based on a compliant truck design but are built entirely as a non-standard vehicle are referred to as 'ground up' builds. These vehicles generally do not have any demonstrated compliance with ADRs and must be fully assessed.

5. Do I need an IPS?

Non-standard road vehicles with an existing exemption from the relevant Vehicle Standards do not need to obtain an IPS to be eligible for registration.

Additionally, vehicles that have already been registered or otherwise used in transport in Australia should not require IPS. However, these vehicles may still require a **Vehicle Standards Exemption**.

Exemptions from complying with the Vehicle Standards can only be issued by either the Federal Department or the NHVR.

Vehicle Standards Exemptions issued by the Federal Department

Exemptions issued by the Federal Department must be obtained before the vehicle is provided to a consumer for the first time, and apply for the life of the vehicle.

These exemptions will be listed on the vehicle approval and are applicable in all Jurisdictions of Australia. To confirm the Vehicle Standards exemptions, customers can use the vehicle approval number to search either the Road Vehicle Certification System's (RVCS) database or the Road Vehicle Regulator's (ROVER) database.

The search results can be used as evidence of exemption and to gain registration.

Note: The vehicle approval number can be found either on the compliance plate or by using the VIN to search the [RAV](#).

Vehicle Standards exemptions issued by the NHVR

Exemptions issued by the NHVR are applied to vehicles after the vehicle has been provided to a consumer (in-service vehicles) and are applicable only in HVNL participating jurisdictions.

These exemptions may be granted to specific vehicles by issuing a *Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit* or to a type of vehicle by publishing a Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice.

Note: NHVR issued exemptions may be subject to an expiration date or may need to be transferred when the ownership of the vehicle changes.

When an application is received, the NHVR must consider the Vehicle Standards and any safety risks to decide if an application for exemption from one or more Vehicle Standards can be granted. For more information, visit the [Applications and forms](#) page.

Vehicle Standards Exemption (Permit)

A NHVR *Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit* is different from an IPS. Where a vehicle has been given IPS, it will advise if an exemption permit is required before the vehicle can be used on a road.

Vehicle Standards Exemption Permits must be assessed by NHVR within the [approved guidelines](#). These are a set of rules the NHVR must follow when considering an exemption.

In broad terms there are three circumstances where a *Vehicle Standards Exemption* can be considered:

- an exemption is required for the heavy vehicle to operate for the purpose which the vehicle was built or modified
- the heavy vehicle is an experimental or prototype vehicle and could not reasonably comply with the Vehicle Standards regulations
- the heavy vehicle has previously not been required to comply to a similar standard under a jurisdiction law prior to the commencement of the HVNL.

The NHVR will assess an application for IPS using the same considerations as for an exemption permit. An IPS will not be issued if the vehicle would not be eligible for a *Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit*.

Vehicle standards exemption (notice)

Where the NHVR has assessed multiple applications for the same category of vehicle, a *Heavy Vehicle (Vehicle Standards) Exemption Notice* (Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice) may be published.

Vehicle Standards Exemption Notices are legal instruments that have been published in the National Gazette and may be used by anyone who can comply with the conditions prescribed in them.

Some Vehicle Standards Exemption Notices will apply nationally (i.e., they apply in all participating jurisdictions), or they may be State specific. Anyone taking advantage of the exemptions provided by a Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice must ensure they are aware of, and can comply with, all conditions stated in the notice.

An example of one such Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice is the [National Heavy Vehicle Standards \(Special Purpose Vehicles\) Exemption Notice 2021 \(No.1\)](#).

National Heavy Vehicle Standards (Special Purpose Vehicles) Exemption Notice 2021 (No.1)

This notice provides an exemption from certain vehicle standards for certain SPVs.

To assist in determining eligibility to operate under the notice, a simple check sheet has been developed, refer to pages 10 – 12 of the [National Heavy Vehicle Standards \(Special Purpose Vehicles Exemption Notice 2021 Operator's Guide\)](#).

Vehicles that are not eligible to operate under the National Heavy Vehicle Standards (Special Purpose Vehicles) Exemption Notice 2021 (No.1) may be eligible to operate under another Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice.

Note: Current Notices are published on the NHVRs website at: <https://www.nhvr.gov.au/law-policies/notices-and-permit-based-schemes>

If the vehicle does not meet the requirements or cannot comply with the conditions set out in a published Notice, an IPS and a **Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit** may be required.

Note: New vehicles that meet the requirements of an existing NHVR exemption may be required to submit an IPS application to meet the Federal Department's import requirements.

Evidence requirements for registration

Some jurisdictions may request evidence of an existing exemption before the vehicle will be registered. Where this evidence cannot be obtained, the NHVR may be able to provide a letter confirming that there is an existing exemption.

6. The IPS application

Once it has been determined that an IPS is required, an application for IPS can be made to the NHVR.

The NHVR will assess the vehicle for non-compliances with the Vehicle Standards, identify any safety risks associated with the non-compliances and impose conditions on the vehicle and its use on a road.

It is important to nominate the State or Territory the vehicle is to be used in as registration and access requirements may differ between jurisdictions.

The NHVR will contact the relevant state or territory transport authority to obtain an assurance that the vehicle will obtain provisional access to at least one road on the road network and be eligible for registration

Note: This access assurance does not guarantee full access to the road network. Customers should contact NHVR's Access team to discuss a more comprehensive access assessment.

Applications to the NHVR, including those regarding Vehicle Standards, must be made online through the NHVR Portal.

NHVR Portal

The NHVR Portal is a digital platform that aims to deliver a seamless experience for all regulatory services through the NHVR. [The Portal](#) can be found on the NHVR website.

To gain access to any of the services within NHVR Portal you must first be a registered user and have an active account with a Regulator Customer Number (RCN). For more information on how to set up an account, follow the link: <https://help.nhvr.gov.au/cmp4/help-centre-customer/find-out-more/getting-started/getting-started-using-vehicle-standards>

Before starting the application

Before starting the application, it is important to note that, there may be some circumstances where the IPS either cannot be issued or becomes invalid.

Where the application may relate to a proposed vehicle, if there is uncertainty about the vehicle specifications that can be supplied, the NHVR may not be able to provide a definitive answer.

Additionally, it should be noted that where the constructed vehicle does not match the vehicle specifications listed in the IPS application, or cannot comply with the imposed conditions, the IPS may become invalid.

To ensure the application is submitted with the relevant information, and to minimise processing delays customers should:

- ensure information relevant to the application is current and accurate to the vehicle
- ensure all documents submitted are in English
- obtain all relevant manufacturer engineering drawings, schematics, and reports
- where applicable, gain copies of previous approvals issued to the vehicle
- check for any additional approvals or reports
- consider seeking advice from a third-party service provider to assist with the application process.

Submitting the application

When the application is submitted, an application ID (case number) will be generated and a confirmation email will be sent advising the application has been lodged with the NHVR,.

Assistance in navigating through the process of applying for an IPS application can be found at:

<https://help.nhvr.gov.au/display/CMP4/IPS+application+-+VS+Customer>

Note: Customers can register a third-party service provider on their portal account to manage the application on their behalf

Information requests

The NHVR may send an Information Request (IR) asking for clarification or additional information regarding the application. These requests (and any reminders) will appear in the portal and also by email.

An example of an IR for additional information may require the customer to obtain an engineer’s report. The NHVR may request that an engineering assessment be carried out to support complex applications, or where the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) information is not available.

The IR will advise of the timeframe for submitting a response. Customers are advised that the application may be closed if the requested information is not received within the advised timeframe.

Helpful tips

Multiple applications

A single application may be used for up to five identical vehicles.

Multiple non-identical vehicles should be submitted on separate applications.

Applications submitted by service provider

A customer may nominate a service provider or consultant to act on their behalf. Any service provider or consultant MUST be nominated as a user on the customer’s account.

Where a service provider or consultant has not been nominated, the NHVR may only provide information to the Authorising Business/Person Representative nominated on the customer account.

Draft applications

Customers can begin an application and save the progress as a draft on the account. Draft applications allow the customer to amend the application. There is no time period for the draft to be submitted.

This may be helpful where more information is required to complete the submission or to support the application.

Making amendments to an application

Once an application has been submitted, customers cannot make amendments to the information provided.

Where customers wish to advise of administrative errors, or other corrections required, the information request (IR) function in the Portal may be used.

Additional Instructions

Customers can include supplementary comments in the ‘additional instructions’ step of the application.

The additional instructions section of the application is a free text field that gives customers an opportunity to provide any information they believe is relevant to, or will support the reasons for, the exemption.

Use this section to provide any supporting information not already supplied in the application.

Jurisdiction Access Consent

An important step in the assessment of an IPS application is consultation by NHVR with the Access Department in the relevant road transport authority, on the behalf of the Customer.

By doing this, the NHVR is able to provide customers with an indication of the likely level of access to state owned roads and any conditions that may be imposed on the use of the vehicle. This provides the customer an opportunity to consider the viability of their chosen vehicle.

Note: Permission to access the road network is not required for an exemption from a vehicle standard, this process is followed to assist customers.

Timeframes

The NHVR is committed to the timely processing of applications in the order of receipt. Factors that may impact the processing time of an IPS application include:

- the completeness of the application
- the complexity of the vehicle
- external consultation (road managers and other authorities, access consent)
- information requests

Customers can use the [Case Tracker](#) and overview functions in the Portal to identify what stage their application is at. Checking this in the Portal will help identify if there are any issues or what step the application is at.

Case Tracker Overview and examples

For transparency, customers can use the case tracker to readily identify the stage that their application is at.

Overview

Case progress



Case duration



The stages the application passes through are:

- Being assessed
- Information requests
- Consent Requested
- Finalising Outcome
- Case complete

The tracker uses a bar graph to represent the time period that has lapsed for each stage of the application.

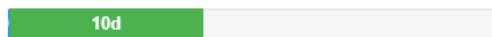
If there is an outstanding IR the application will indicate as paused and the time with the customer shown (see below).

Overview

Case progress



Case duration



Outcome of application

Once the application for IPS has been assessed and finalised, customers will receive a notification by email stating that an outcome document has been generated in the NHVR Portal. The notification email will be sent to the nominated contact person as stated on the application.

Note: The **notification** may contain additional information about requirements regarding the vehicles access to the road network. The outcome document attached to the application in the portal may not contain this additional information.

There are three likely outcomes for an application for IPS. These are:

- Supported: existing exemption (advisory letter)
- Supported: with conditions (SoR)
- Not supported

The outcome document will outline any relevant next steps including if the customer will be required to apply for a Vehicle Standards exemption permit.

A supported outcome document may contain specific conditions relating to the application or advising owners and operators the vehicle is eligible to operate under an existing Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice.

The outcome document is the formal outcome of the assessment. Use the outcome document as evidence of IPS.

Supported: existing exemption

Vehicles that have been assessed as being eligible to operate under an existing exemption may be issued an advisory letter of support. This letter may include vehicle specific information however, it may not detail the exemption conditions applicable to accessing the road network.

The owner or operator must obtain a copy of the Vehicle Standards Exemption Notice and also contact NHVRs Access team to determine what access permissions are required.

Supported: with conditions

Where an application for IPS has been assessed and it has been determined that the vehicle requires a Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit, the NHVR will issue an outcome document advising that the application is supported and attach a Statement of Requirements (SoR).

To manage the risks associated with the non-compliance of the non-standard road vehicle, certain conditions may be applied to the vehicle. These conditions will be outlined in the SoR.

Note: The conditions listed on the SoR must be complied with for the vehicle to be eligible for a Vehicle Standards exemption and will be included in any exemption issued for the vehicle in the future.

Additionally, the SoR may include State specific information regarding:

- registration
- inspection requirements
- access to the road network (as applicable)

Note: If a more detailed access assessment is required the owner or operator must contact the NHVR Access team to determine what access permissions are required.

Not supported

Where an application for IPS has been assessed and is not supported, the NHVR will issue an outcome document advising that the application is not supported and the reasons for the decision.

An application may not be supported for a number of reasons including:

- the vehicle will not be granted a Vehicle Standards exemption permit
- the nominated jurisdiction has advised the vehicle will not be granted road access
- the nominated jurisdiction has advised the vehicle will not be granted registration

7. Next steps

Once an application for IPS has been assessed and supported, there are a number of additional steps the customer must make before the vehicle can be used on a road.

It is important to note that the outcome document is not permission to access the road network. Where an application for IPS is supported, the vehicle has been assessed as *eligible* for exemption from the Vehicle Standards, registration, and has provisional access to the road network.

Owners and operators must complete the relevant process before using the vehicle on a road. This may include:

- Importing, building or modifying the vehicle
- Applying for a VS exemption
- Obtaining additional inspections
- Registering the vehicle
- Obtaining permission to access the road network

Applications for Exemption from a Vehicle Standard

Where an application for IPS is supported, the customer is required to apply for an exemption from the relevant Vehicle Standards detailed in the SoR or advisory letter.

Applications for exemption from a vehicle standard must be made with either the Federal Department (before it has been provided to a consumer) or the [NHVR](#) depending on the entry pathway for that vehicle.

The outcome letter will advise the customer if an application for Vehicle Standards exemption needs to be made with the NHVR.

Customers should include the outcome document to support their application for exemption once the vehicle has been built or imported.

Additional approvals

In some circumstances, additional approvals may be required, or third parties be consulted to ensure the vehicle meets any imposed conditions.

Examples of third parties requiring consultation and/or approval include:

- Approved Vehicle Examiner (AVE)
- Engineer
- PBS Assessors
- Vehicle Manufacturer

Registration

Non-standard road vehicles must be registered before they can be used on a road.

Generally, the outcome document or the notification will contain inspection and registration information. Customers should still contact the State or Territory road transport authority the vehicle is to be used in to discuss inspection and other registration requirements.

Inspection requirements

Some jurisdictions may require a non-standard road vehicle to be inspected before it can be registered.

Inspections should be carried out in accordance with the local jurisdictional requirements. The outcome document will include contact details for the nominated jurisdiction and any other relevant details or inspection requirements.

Note: While it is not a requirement for the vehicle inspection to be completed prior to an application for a Vehicle Standards Exemption Permit, doing so will ensure that the vehicle meets the requirements outlined in the outcome document.

Road Access

Non-standard road vehicles must be granted access the road network. This may be provided by an Access Notice or by an individual Access Permit.

For further information on vehicle access exemptions visit: <https://www.nhvr.gov.au/road-access> or visit our website at www.nhvr.gov.au, or call 136 487.

8. Additional information

Fees and charges

The NHVR does not currently charge for processing Vehicle Standards applications however a fee may be imposed in the future.

If required, customers may incur fees and charges associated with the following:

- assessment of infrastructure by Road Managers
- vehicle inspections, modifications, or certification
- application for access assessment to the road network by Road Managers
- The fees and charges associated with the above may vary depending on the location and complexity of the service.

Staying up to date

The information in this guide was current at the time of publication. Regulations, Standards and the NHVR all continue to evolve over time. This document may be reviewed and updated as required, customers should check the NHVR website for updates.

Appendix 1 - Abbreviations and meanings

Abbreviation	Meaning
ADRs	Australia Design Rules
AVE	Approved Vehicle Examiner
CWLTH	Commonwealth
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts
GVM	Gross Vehicle Mass
HVNL	Heavy Vehicle National Law
IPS	In-Principle Support
IR	Information Request
LGAs	Local Government Areas
NHVR	National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
OSOM	Oversize Over Mass
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
PBS	Performance Based Standards
RAV	Register of Approved Vehicles
RCN	Regulator Customer Number
ROVER	Road Vehicle Regulator
RVCS	Road Vehicle Certification Search
RVSA	Road Vehicle Standards Act
SoR	Statement of Requirements
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
VIN	Vehicle Identification Number
VSS	Vehicle Safety Standards
Service provider	A service provider is an external party nominated by the customer administrator to act on their behalf during the application process.