



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Heavy Vehicle National Law

Reform proposition 2.7: Rapid economic appraisals of opening up as-of-right access for high-productivity freight vehicles on certain routes

December 2024

December 2024 Statement: Update on work being done on HPFV access

Preamble

The package of reforms to the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL), agreed by Ministers in August 2022, included reform proposition 2.7:

“That a rapid economic appraisal be conducted on the costs and benefits of an ambitious reform agenda of opening up as-of-right access to specific routes along the National Road Transport Network and that subsequent business cases be prepared where benefits outweigh costs. The routes proposed for appraisal are the Hume Highway productivity upgrade (NSW, VIC & ACT), Queensland Inland Freight Route, Port Wakefield-Adelaide Duplication (SA), Great Northern Highway upgrade (WA), Northern Tasmanian Road Freight upgrade, Stuart Highway Flood Immunity.”

A ‘rapid economic appraisal’ is an assessment of the costs and benefits of granting as-of-right access (quicker than a full cost-benefit analysis).

In the two years since August 2022, there has been significant work and road upgrades in each jurisdiction to increase access for high-productivity freight vehicles (HPFVs) on key routes. Not all of this work involved a specific cost-benefit analysis; some of the work was part of broader initiatives already underway.

In light of this work, and near-term further work that has been announced, there may no longer be a need for rapid economic appraisals on each of the routes nominated in reform proposition 2.7. Instead, this update statement summarises the work that is being done in each jurisdiction, including the details of any relevant cost-benefit analysis. We trust this is useful information for the road freight industry and it helps deliver on the intent of reform proposition 2.7, even if benefit-cost ratios are not being disclosed.

The information in this statement is also relevant to HVNL reform proposition 1.2, under which each jurisdiction will produce a forward-looking work plan of heavy vehicle access improvements.

If you have any comments on the information in this statement, please email them to:
HVNL.Steering.Committee.Secretariat@infrastructure.gov.au.

Jurisdiction: New South Wales

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Hume Highway

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: B-triples and A-doubles up to 35m

What work has been done to date

In April 2024, Transport for NSW (TfNSW) released the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy Draft. The Policy will deliver new and innovative ways to safely and sustainably optimise access on the NSW road network for heavy vehicles, particularly high productivity freight vehicles (HPFVs).

The Policy also focuses on a strategic approach to maintaining and upgrading roads, to align with projected population growth, development of strategic centres across NSW, and freight movement patterns.

Appendix A of the draft Policy lists the Hume Highway as a proposed PBS3 network, which includes:

- B-doubles, road trains (modern and traditional A-doubles and A-triples), B-triples and AB triples
- 4.6m high vehicles such as livestock vehicles and car carriers
- All heavy vehicles carrying higher mass limits (HMLs), including special purpose vehicles (SPVs) and oversize over mass (OSOM) vehicles.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

Transport for NSW has undertaken an initial analysis of the Newell, Hume and Pacific Highways to understand the constraints for an A-Triple. Constraints assessed included:

- Intersection configurations
- Road width
- Bridge clearance
- Rest areas
- Heavy vehicle safety stations
- Overtaking lanes
- Level crossings (stacking only).

The analysis identified a number of constraints including intersection configurations (of the 46 intersections assessed, 21 were considered a risk) and rest areas (approximately 40 rest areas require upgrades). Further work is required for bridges and level crossings.

A cost benefit analysis has not been undertaken and is not proposed at this time. However TfNSW will continue to progress delivery of the Policy actions to ensure the safe, sustainable and productive movement of freight.

What future work is planned

For further information on the NSW Heavy Vehicle Access Policy, follow the link below:

[Heavy Vehicle Access Policy | Transport for NSW.](#)

Jurisdiction: Victoria

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Hume Highway

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: B-triples and A-doubles up to 35m

What work has been done to date

Enhanced freight access on the Hume Highway is part of a broader strategy to improve the capacity of High Productivity Freight Vehicles (HPFVs) across Victoria. Improvements to the Hume Highway route formed a key component of the rollout of the 2021 High Productivity Freight Vehicle Plan “Moving More with Less” (the Plan). The Plan aimed to support the more efficient utilisation of HPFVs and to simplify the network permit system to enable the movement of freight on major instate routes, including the Hume Highway.

Victoria has enabled a suite of reference vehicle configurations to operate on the Victorian HPFV network. It is now feasible for the following vehicle combinations to be used on the HPFV network in Victoria:

- Quad-axle semi-trailers
- Tri-axle and quad-axle B-doubles
- 30 metre A-doubles
- 36.5 metre A-doubles
- 36.5 metre B-Triples and
- 36.5 metre A-B-Triples.

Since 2021, Victoria has gazetted its High-Productivity Freight Vehicle network. This means that a 36.5-metre A-Double or B-Triple can operate on the Hume Hwy without a permit.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

A specific rapid economic appraisal of freight access to the Hume Highway was not undertaken as the development of the HPFV Plan was underpinned by separate analyses.

What future work is planned

The Victorian Department of Transport and Planning continues to assess network upgrades and bridge strengthening for key freight routes. This work includes the establishment and upgrade of rest areas. Work is also underway to support and facilitate the transition to zero and low emission heavy vehicles.

Jurisdiction: Queensland

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Inland Freight Route

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: Type 2 road trains, PBS Level 4A vehicles and vehicles approved for HML

What work has been done to date

The Department of Transport and Main Roads’ long-term vision on heavy vehicle access for the Inland Freight Route is for the route to provide "as-of-right" access for Type 2 Road Trains, PBS Level 4A vehicles and for vehicles approved for Higher Mass Limits (HML). As it will be some time before the long-term access vision can be realised for the entire route, interim solutions will be appropriate in some circumstances.

In the 2020 'A Real Bruce Plan', the Queensland Government committed to upgrading the 1185-kilometre Inland Freight Route to effectively establish a viable north-south alternative to the Bruce Highway (also known as the Second Bruce) between Mungindi on the Queensland / New South Wales border and Charters Towers.

The Queensland Government has allocated \$200 million toward upgrading the Inland Freight Route, with the Australian Government contributing \$800 million. This \$1 billion committed investment across 10 years will work towards achieving the vision of extending Type 2 access across the Inland Freight Route.

An early works package is already underway, with bridge, culvert and pavement works contributing to this vision in the longer term, while progressively expanding the current higher mass limits (HML) network across the IFR. Emerald to Charters Towers (477km of the total 1185km of the IFR) is already accessible by Type 2 General Mass Limit (GML) vehicles.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

Given the Department of Transport and Main Roads has recognised the benefits of increased access for the entire Inland Freight Route—and is working towards achieving the Heavy Vehicle Access Vision over time—the department does not intend to undertake an economic analysis on the benefits of upgrading the route.

What future work is planned

\$107 million of the Queensland Government commitment has already been allocated to accelerate the upgrade, with the early works package including two bridge upgrades (construction underway), culvert upgrades and pavement strengthening and widening works (construction underway).

Jurisdiction: Western Australia (note that WA is not a HVNL jurisdiction)

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Great Northern Highway

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: Focus is on flood resilience for all road freight vehicles

What work has been done to date

An assessment of upgrades required to accommodate 40 and 60 metre PBS vehicles was done in 2019 and identified a need for extension of some existing overtaking lanes, additional overtaking opportunities and intersections improvements. The analysis complemented the findings from the route and network assessment process in regard to network improvements, including for freight access and efficiency, such as overtaking lanes, seal widening, intersections improvements, town bypasses and new links.

Funding was obtained for the following projects relevant to the Great Northern Highway (GNH):

- 11 overtaking lanes on the GNH between Newman and Port Headland (\$50 million, delivery underway)
- Intersection upgrades on the GNH in Port Headland (\$10 million, to start delivery in 2024–25)
- Bridge replacement at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberly (\$250 million, completed).

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

See details above of analysis undertaken.

Main Roads WA has developed a process for assessing network resilience and risk due to natural hazards and has conducted an analysis of 16 years of road closure due to flooding and bushfires and rated sections of the network in terms of resilience and risk for these two types of hazards.

What future work is planned

WA is in the process of developing a long-term program to improve network resilience in the face of natural hazards. Proposed solutions range from bridge replacement, culways and floodways upgrade, drainage improvements, pavement reconstruction, to utilisation of materials better suited for the current and future climatic conditions. Consideration will be given to asset improvements considering a whole of life cycle approach, from corridor planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance.

Other projects awaiting funding include:

- East Link that will significantly improve freight access and efficiency on the Perth-Adelaide corridor
- Bindoon Bypass which will extend access of triple road trains South of Muchea (some 218 km).

Jurisdiction: South Australia

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Port Wakefield-Adelaide duplication

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: 53.5m HPFVs

What work has been done to date

South Australia has developed a strategic business case for its 'Early Stage Proposal - High Productivity Vehicle Network (HPVN) Access' project. This project is designed to deliver PBS Level 4A access across a statewide network, comprising a corridor from the South Australia / Victorian border through to the South Australia / Western Australia border. The network includes the Eyre, Sturt, Augusta and Dukes Highways as well as connecting routes around Greater Adelaide and to Outer Harbor. The HPVN Access project is on the Infrastructure Australia priority list.

This HPVN work has involved consultation with cross border road authorities, local government representative committee, national and state transport and freight advocacy committee, major retail companies, national and state transport operators. A detailed economic and integrated assessment was developed for the strategic business case and completed in June 2024.

The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) has approved considerable expansion of its Restricted Access Vehicle Network since 2016, which equates to approximately 9,000 km of its network. DIT has an ongoing program of infrastructure works which is published at <https://dit.sa.gov.au/about-us/strategies-plans/forward-work-plan>. In recent years partnership programs with the Commonwealth have delivered a range of freight-related works on the Horrocks, Princes, Eyre, Sturt, Lincoln, and Augusta Highways.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

The strategic business case for the HPVN Access project has been completed and the project is listed with Infrastructure Australia for further development.

What future work is planned

Following the completed strategic business case, a HPVN Access project full business case will be prepared in 2025, updating the costs and benefits of implementing a final network solution. It will form the basis of partnership proposals that could be put to the Australian Government.

Jurisdiction: Tasmania

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Bass Hwy and Birralee Rd

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: HPFV for Birralee Road; duplication of Bass Hwy to relieve congestion.

What work has been done to date

The Freight Capacity Upgrade Program include sections of the Bass Highway for repair and strengthening works. The Northern Roads Package is a series of road upgrades planned for key inter-regional freight linkages, including through Birralee Road. Both projects aim to meet the needs of current and future heavy vehicles on key freight routes.

Upgrades to Birralee Road form part of the broader [Northern Roads Package stage one](#), covering the 53 km connection between Bass Highway and East Tamar Highway. This project improves safety for all road users including existing HPFVs (up to 26 metre length) and importantly provides the opportunity for increased access for HPFVs to 30 metre length (PBS level 2), subject to mass limitations on Batman Bridge.

As part of the project, a heavy vehicle rest area (HVRA) has been constructed and is operational at Sidmouth. The status of widening and shoulder sealing works is as follows:

- Batman Highway: commenced February 2022, and will be completed before the end of 2024
- Birralee Road: southern section commenced February 2024, with expected completion December 2024
- Frankford Road: construction to follow completion of Birralee Road upgrades.

On the Bass Highway between Launceston and Burnie, access is provided for HPFVs up to 36.5 metres in length (PBS level 3). This includes the 91 km section between Launceston and Port Sorell Road (Devonport), which is only partially duplicated. For HPFV (and all road users), upgrade works provide benefits in safety and travel time reliability, rather than increased levels of access for HPFV.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

A benefit-cost analysis was prepared as part of the funding submission for the Northern Roads Package. The analysis estimated a standard benefit-cost ratio of 2.4 for the project. Major benefits include:

- Freight operational cost savings – through shorter trips and enabling HPFVs such as A-Doubles
- Time savings – for all vehicle and occupant types
- Accident reductions
- Environmental benefits – reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to fuel savings
- Lower vehicle maintenance costs.

What future work is planned

The [Bass Highway 10 Year Action Plan](#) sets out the current and future upgrade priorities for three major sections across the full length of the Bass Highway. The [Bass Highway Corridor Strategy – Launceston to Devonport](#) was released in February 2023 with a staged approach of implementation works to include duplication, overtaking lanes and heavy vehicle driver rest areas recommended in a priority order.

- Short-term work packages will provide intersection improvements, additional overtaking lanes with median safety barrier separation around Christmas Hills and Parramatta Creek;
- Medium-term work packages will extend existing overtaking lanes and median safety barrier separation in several locations - Hadspen to Hagley, near Exton, and from Port Sorell Road to Moriarty Road, Latrobe; and
- Long-term work packages will complete duplication of remaining sections between Launceston and Devonport.

Specific timeframes for the above works are yet to be announced.

Jurisdiction: Northern Territory (note that NT is not a HVNL jurisdiction)

Freight route nominated by the ATA: Tanami Road

Freight vehicle classes for which as-of-right access sought: 53.5 m vehicles at HML-equivalent already have as-of-right access, so the focus is on road sealing and flood resilience for all vehicles

What work has been done to date

Commonwealth co-funded upgrades to the Tanami Road have been announced and are underway. It is anticipated the announced funding will complete the sealing of the Tanami within the NT. HPFV access is already as-of-right and the programmed upgrades will continue to improve connectivity, flood immunity, safety, access and economic development.

- Total funding of \$825m (\$660m Australian Government; \$165m NT Government)
- Works for the upgrade and sealing between CH 271.84 and 330.58 km were completed in late 2023.
- Upgrade and seal of additional 90 km between CH 330.58 to 420 km have commenced, with an anticipated completion by end of 2024.

Economic appraisal of costs and benefits

Benefit-cost ratios have been calculated as required by the Australian Government 'Notes on Administration' and with guidance provided by Infrastructure Australia and the Australian Transport Assessment and Planning (ATAP) Guidelines, in order to release funding for the delivery of upgrades projects on Tanami Road.

What future work is planned

Construction has commenced on the next stage of the upgrade, CH 421 to 534 km, that will seal the road past the Granites/Tanami Mine. Procurement planning has commenced for the Tanami Road upgrade CH 17.10 to 38.30 km.