

Review on Oversize Overmass (OSOM) Access Arrangements

Terms of Reference

Scope

The Oversize Overmass (OSOM) Review will run for approximately three months and will assess and, where possible, quantify the productivity, asset management and safety impact of existing access arrangements for OSOM vehicles. The Review will examine and make findings focused on:

1. Current access arrangements for OSOM vehicles and permit approval times, including Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL) designated roles, processes and responsibilities;
2. Current practices and principles used by road managers to understand the key considerations that underpin the assessment of risk and risk-mitigation decisions;
3. The factors that contribute to approval times from application to issuing access permits, including route and asset assessments, the IT systems and tools used, and third party consultation.
4. The impact on industry and road managers from existing OSOM access arrangements;
5. Attributes or components of equivalent best practice arrangements;
6. Variations in OSOM access arrangements and permit approval processes between states, territories and local governments, and communication processes for changes to operational policies;
7. Priority matters to be considered by the National Transport Commission Review of the HVNL; and
8. Strategies to reduce the number of access permits issued or to reduce the time taken to issue permits, and their effectiveness in improving OSOM access arrangements.

Without compromising safety, the review will consider recommendations which are more quickly implementable on:

1. The greater use of technology and data in improving OSOM access arrangements;
2. Improved reporting arrangements for industry, road managers, and governments including regular timely reporting and more accessible statistics;
3. More streamlined and visible permit approval processes;
4. Better identification and strategies to support the uptake of best practice;
5. Improving OSOM access outcomes through better industry planning and engagement;
6. Improving arrangements for sector-specific vehicles, such as agriculture;
7. Improving permit approval timeframes; and
8. Harmonised police and/or pilot arrangements between jurisdictions.

The report will be supported by evidence and will provide qualitative analysis where data is not available. Industry, governments, local councils and the regulator will be consulted in the development of the Review and it will be oversighted by the Heavy Vehicle Strategy Group. The review will consider and make recommendations on the relative benefit of implementing short vs medium term options.

A draft report is to be made available for industry and government comment by the end of August 2018, and the final report provided to the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials' Committee in September 2018.

Deliverables

An interim report, focusing on improvements that could be delivered in the short term, will be provided within six weeks of project commencement, and a final report provided to the Heavy Vehicle Strategy Group by September 2018.

Background

Oversize Overmass (OSOM) vehicles are heavy vehicles that are carrying, or are specially designed to carry, a large indivisible item. These items can vary significantly, and may include: wind turbines, mining movements such as drills and dump trucks, generators for power stations, pre-fabricated construction material such as bridge beams, mobile concrete plants, or large agricultural harvesters or equipment.

By definition these movements exceed the dimensions (including mass and mass distribution on the vehicle combination) that roads were originally designed to accommodate. Therefore they pose greater risks in terms of both road safety and damage to road infrastructure than normal heavy vehicle movements.

Australia's economy is highly dependent on OSOM movements to service industries including mining and resources, agriculture, defence, construction and infrastructure. Due to the size of OSOM vehicles, they generally require permits and sometimes pilots and escorts to ensure the route and load is safe for transit.

The HVNL commenced in most Australian states and territories from 2014 (with QLD as the host jurisdiction), and was designed to provide a consistent, robust, and workable operational framework for regulating and regulated parties, particularly in regard to road network access, which had previously been primarily a state/territory responsibility.

With the HVNL in place for over four years, it is clear that while many provisions within the HVNL are working as designed, the issue of timely and safe access to the road network for OSOM vehicles is problematic for parts of industry. Therefore, to complement the wide ranging review of the HVNL managed by the National Transport Commission, a thorough examination of current access arrangements in the HVNL and recommendations for concerning immediate or quickly implementable options to improve OSOM access arrangements is sought.

The recently released Inquiry into National Freight and Supply Chain Priorities report noted that in order to secure the nation's productivity into the future, Australia needs a national and integrated approach to freight. With the freight and logistics sector accounting for up to 10 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product, the report identified network access as a critical need and recommended streamlining the permit approval process including for OSOM vehicles, reducing the overall average approval period on key routes.

Consultation

Consultation with jurisdictions, local councils and the regulator will be conducted to inform potential new approaches for the recommendations.