

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Performance Based Standards Scheme

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### **Q. What is the Performance Based Standards scheme?**

Heavy vehicle operators can choose to have new, innovative truck and bus designs assessed under the Performance Based Standards (PBS) scheme. Under the scheme, vehicles are designed to perform tasks in more productive, safe and sustainable ways. These vehicles do not subscribe to the traditional 'prescriptive' regulations regarding truck length and mass and are specifically designed to perform a certain task as productively and safely as possible.

The scheme has been in operation within state and territory road authorities since October 2007. The current arrangements allow for PBS designs to be assessed and approved by the PBS Review Panel (PRP), and road network access negotiated separately by operators through state/territory and local road authorities.

### **Q. Why is it important to support the uptake of higher productivity vehicles?**

The efficient movement of people and goods is integral to lifting the productivity and supporting the growth of the whole economy.

According to work conducted by IBIS World for a 2009 report by Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, Australia's freight task will triple by 2050 – from 503 billion tonne kilometres to 1,540 billion tonne kilometres.

Challenges such as urbanisation and climate change also increase the pressure to create a more efficient transport system. PBS is a solution to drive economic growth by making the freight task more efficient without comprising safety or environmental protection.

## **Q. How safe are PBS vehicles?**

Under the PBS scheme, [vehicles need to meet 16 minimum vehicle 'performance' standards](#) to ensure they are stable on the road and can turn and stop safely. This is above and beyond the requirements for regular heavy vehicles.

Risks are further minimised by only allowing PBS vehicles on appropriate roads as determined by road managers (see below).

## **Q. What impact will PBS vehicles have roads and bridges?**

PBS vehicles generally do no more damage to roads and bridges than ordinary vehicles. In many cases, PBS vehicles do less damage as better productivity means less road use.

The PBS scheme offers a robust risk assessment tool which ensures that the vehicles are safe and will not damage roads or bridges on the road networks. The scheme specifies four different performance levels; so that the on-road performance of the truck is matched to the environment it is travelling in:

- Level 1: equivalent to General Access
- Level 2: equivalent to B-double routes
- Level 3: equivalent to Double road train routes
- Level 4: equivalent to Triple road train routes

Guidelines assist road managers to classify routes into one of the four levels above. When assessed as meeting one of the four performance levels, access is granted to the corresponding network level.

Heavier vehicles may be subject to a tier 3 (bridge specific) bridge assessments. These vehicles will be required to obtain permission and assessment of requested routes before being permitted to register the vehicle. For these types of vehicles, it is very important to have access arranged with road authorities before submitting a PBS application.

## **Q. How do I make an application for a PBS vehicle?**

Details on the application process [are available from the NTC website](#).

## **Q. How do I arrange road access for my PBS vehicle?**

Road access for PBS vehicles is determined and arranged through the relevant road authorities. More information can be found on the [Road and Bridge access page of the NTC website](#)

The NTC website also features an [interactive maps portal](#) which details all current approved PBS routes.

## **Q. What role does the NTC play in the PBS scheme?**

The NTC developed the policy and legislation for the scheme which has been in operation under administrative arrangements within state and territory governments since 2007.

The NTC currently performs a secretariat role for the [PBS Review Panel \(PRP\)](#).

From 2013, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will operate the PBS scheme and PBS Review Panel. The NTC will work with the NHVR to support and provide subject matter expertise concerning the PBS Scheme.

### **Q. Why are changes being made to the PBS scheme?**

In July 2009, the NTC reviewed the operation of the PBS scheme. The review concluded that while the current PBS scheme has had success in improving productivity for some operators, many in the industry have been discouraged from participating due to the uncertainty around obtaining road network access from state/territory and local governments and cost and flexibility issues related to entering the scheme.

### **Q. What changes are being made to the scheme?**

The PBS scheme will move to a national assessment and access framework utilising the national heavy vehicle law and single heavy vehicle regulator. The following changes will be made to the PBS business and assessment rules:

- self-assessment and certification for manufacturers to produce pre-approved 'off the shelf' PBS vehicles
- modular certification of trucks and trailers to give operators more choice when purchasing pre-approved PBS equipment.

Moving to manufacturers' self-certification will further reduce the cost of PBS vehicles to operators. This will remove the need for manufacturers to employ a third party to certify each vehicle, and these savings can be passed on to customers.

Modular assessment will allow industry to mix and match PBS vehicle components, making it easier for manufacturers to offer a more flexible combination. Operators will be able to use a range of prime-movers in front of the trailer as long as they have been PBS approved to match the trailer specifications.

Further work will be conducted to ensure that modular assessments are reliable and comply with the vehicle assessment rules.

### **Q. How will the changes to the scheme benefit Australia?**

The NTC estimates that implementation of the changes over the next twenty years will deliver substantial benefits including:

- Providing an economic benefit of \$5.6 billion
- Saving 3.75 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>
- Saving 87 lives.

The new arrangements will deliver certainty of access for PBS vehicles and national consistency in operating and access conditions. Once the design of the vehicle is approved, the vehicle will have the right to access all suitable routes across the country through the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR).

Maps of suitable routes will be assessed and supplied from state/territory and local government road managers.

### **Q. When will the changes occur?**

The scheme will continue to be administered in its current form until the national regulator becomes operational in 2013.

The changes to the scheme will be incorporated into the National Heavy Vehicle Law currently being developed for the NHVR to administer.

The NTC will work with the NHVR to support and provide subject matter expertise concerning the PBS Scheme.

From 2013, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will operate the PBS scheme and PBS Review Panel.

**Q. What is the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR)?**

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will become responsible for regulating all vehicles in Australia over 4.5 tonnes, including registration access, compliance and enforcement from 2013. Currently, heavy vehicles are subjected to different regulations under each state and territory road authority and the NHVR aims to reduce the red tape which impacts upon industry productivity. Under the changes to the PBS scheme, from 2013 the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will become responsible for vehicle assessment and access decisions. It will manage the PRP.

**Q. How can I find out more about the PBS scheme?**

Contact the PBS Secretariat at the NTC on (03) 9236 5080 or email [enquiries@ntc.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ntc.gov.au).