



# Heavy Vehicle Driver Licensing

Paul Rajan  
NatRoad Connect 24 - 13 September 2024



# About Austroads



## The collective of Australasian transport and traffic agencies

- Transport for NSW
- Department of Transport & Planning Victoria
- Department of Transport and Main Roads Queensland
- Department of Transport Western Australia
- Department for Infrastructure and Transport South Australia
- Department of State Growth Tasmania
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics Northern Territory
- Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
- Australian Local Government Association
- New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi





# Presentation overview



1. Overseas Licensing Policy Review
2. Changes to Heavy Vehicle Licensing
3. Heavy Vehicle Crash Risk
4. Treatment of Overseas Heavy Vehicle Licences
5. Next Steps





A decorative graphic consisting of a cluster of orange and green dots, arranged in a pattern that resembles a stylized map of Australia or a network of connections.

# Overseas Licensing Policy Review





# Austroads Overseas Licensing Policy Review

Scope included all vehicles light and heavy in three stages:

Stage 1 examined

- policy settings on the recognition and use of overseas driver licences in Australia and New Zealand
- provided some analysis of safety aspects relating to overseas licensed drivers.
- considered risk-based options for revision of existing policy and practice.





# Austroads Overseas Licensing Policy Review

## Stage 2



Stage 2 considered the evidence provided in Stage 1 and developed policy options consistent with road safety improvement.

Recommended further work to develop implementation and transition arrangements





# Austrroads Overseas Licensing Policy Review

## Stage 3



Stage 3 considered implementation of of Stage 2 policy options

1. Treatment of overseas issued licences
2. Implications for local systems and processes
3. Education of visiting overseas drivers.
4. Consideration of the treatment of overseas issued heavy vehicle (HV) licences.





# Austroads Overseas Licensing Policy Review

## Stage 3



### Outcomes to date

Benchmark 6 months recognition of overseas licence prior to local licence.

Significantly strengthened Recognised Country Scheme for light vehicles and motorcycles to be launched shortly.

Drafting of improved educational and advisory materials for overseas licensed visitors and new residents.

Development of policy options for overseas HV licence management including large scale industry consultation.





A decorative graphic consisting of a cluster of orange and green dots, arranged in a pattern that resembles a stylized flower or a burst of energy.

## **Changes to Heavy Vehicle Licensing**





## Broad Context

With a growing freight task and changing vehicle fleet, Australia needs well-trained and capable heavy vehicle drivers. That starts with effective licensing.

The existing NHVDCF has been in place since 2011 but only been adopted in four States and Territories (Vic, NT, Tas, NSW)

Industry feedback, emerging research and evidence point to opportunities to further improve safety, the driver training experience and capability by strengthening:

- competencies and assessment
- licensing policy







# Process

- Evidence Based Development
- Research
- Industry Feedback
- Response







# Summary of Proposed Licensing Policy Changes

Focus of changes is on addressing risks identified in the current system:

Ministers agreed in-principle to the following changes:

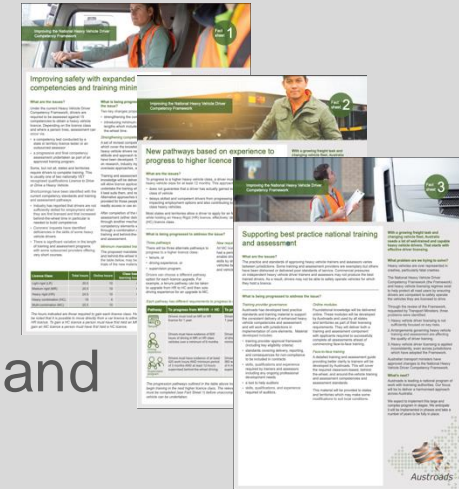
1. Strengthening driving skill and knowledge through **redesigned learning and assessment requirements** specific to each licence class as well as setting minimum course lengths and minimum behind-the-wheel time.
2. Introducing **experience-based progression options** enabling those drivers who can demonstrate driving and work experience to move to higher licence classes more rapidly.
3. Strengthening **training governance** and assisting providers with training and assessment support material.





# Summary of Proposed Licensing Policy Changes

[Project webpage](#) provides a recording of an explanatory webinar and factsheets covering each issue on Austroads website



1. Redesigned learning and assessment requirements [https://austroads.com.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0034/616966/NHVDCF\\_Factsheet1\\_Competerencies\\_and\\_Training.pdf](https://austroads.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/616966/NHVDCF_Factsheet1_Competerencies_and_Training.pdf)
2. Experience-based progression options [https://austroads.com.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0035/616967/NHVDCF\\_Factsheet2\\_Pathways.pdf](https://austroads.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0035/616967/NHVDCF_Factsheet2_Pathways.pdf)
3. Strengthening training governance [https://austroads.com.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0036/616968/NHVDCF\\_Factsheet3\\_Training\\_and\\_Assessment.pdf](https://austroads.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/616968/NHVDCF_Factsheet3_Training_and_Assessment.pdf)







# Crash Risk Assessment







# The Evidence Base

- There are many anecdotes about skills and capabilities of:
  - Overseas licensed drivers
  - Australian trained drivers
- There is limited evidence on the performance of overseas licence holders – however this **does not point** to overseas licensing as a heavy vehicle road safety factor of significance.
  - Crash rates driving on an overseas licence
  - Crash rates after conversion from an overseas licence







# MUARC Research on HV Crash Risk

**Monash University of Accident Research Centre** looked at Licensing factors impacting heavy vehicle driver crash rates

- Examined heavy vehicle crashes (MR, HR and HC) over a 10 year period (Victoria and Qld). Approx 2010 – 2020
- Looked at the licensing history of drivers in the 10 year period **prior**. Considered licence holders who had and did not have a HV crash
- Identified licensing factors linked to an increased likelihood of a heavy vehicle driver being involved in a crash within 5 years of gaining the licence







# MUARC Research on HV Crash Risk

## What does it tell us?

Inexperience and prior history of driving offences are the greatest predictors of a future heavy vehicle crash

Overseas licensing data is limited and mixed but does not point to specific concern either:

- Driving a heavy vehicle on an overseas licence
- Driving a heavy vehicle after converting from an overseas licence





A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of a cluster of orange and green dots arranged in a pattern that resembles a stylized map of Australia or a group of people.

# Overseas Licence Holders





# Overseas Licence Holders

- Current policy for managing overseas heavy vehicle licence holders
- Policy options and areas under consideration in relation to overseas heavy vehicle licence holders
- Next steps







# Current Policy Overview

## Heavy Vehicle Driving on an Overseas Licence

- Can drive the same class of heavy vehicle in Australia as overseas
- Period can drive on the overseas licence varies, however recent in principle agreement by states and territories to require licence transfer to a local licence within 6 months of residency in that jurisdiction (some already require transition to an Australian licence within 3 months of residency)







# Current Policy

## Transition to an Australian HV Licence

### *Eligibility:*

- Some jurisdictions accept overseas licence tenure for upgrading licence class
- Some require an application to allow 'like for like' transfer rather than starting from car/rigid licence

### *Assessment:*

- **All** states and territories require an overseas licence holder to go through full training/assessment required for that licence class - ***Same as an Australian licensed driver***







# Current Policy

## Transition to an Australian HV Licence

However, the class of licence an overseas licensed applicant can transition to varies depending on the jurisdiction. Variations include:

- to the equivalent class allowed on the overseas licence
- to Rigid classes only except on application for exemption
- to Car licence only - although overseas licence tenure counts towards eligibility for a heavy vehicle licence







# Industry Consultation

A survey of drivers and operators over June and July 2024 to test industry views on a number of potential policy directions.

A number of targeted interviews with industry associations were also undertaken.

- Around 1900 survey responses
- The volume of people driving heavy vehicles on an overseas licence for commercial/employment purposes is estimated to be in the order of 10% or less.
- People born overseas, or with a seeming non-Caucasian background, are commonly referred to in the industry as 'overseas drivers' making assessment of real numbers more complex.
- Some described as 'overseas drivers' may actually hold an Australian licence.
- Despite the absence of hard evidence there is a real and widely held perception that overseas licensed HV drivers present a greater safety risk than domestically trained drivers







# Industry Consultation - Overview of Responses

## What are the perceived issues

1. Road safety culture
2. Knowledge of Australian road rules
3. English language skills
4. Experience in Australian road and driving conditions
5. Experience in larger combination vehicles
6. Skills







# Future Policy Options

Four policy principles have been considered three of which were explored in the consultation

1. Ceasing or minimising the period an overseas licence holder can drive a heavy vehicle
2. Limiting the types of vehicles or driving purpose (personal versus commercial)
3. Requiring some form of training or assessment before commercial driving
4. Limiting commercial heavy vehicle driving to specified countries

Then first three have been the subject of widespread consultation with industry and are now the subject of further consideration by licensing authorities.







# Impact on Driver Supply

- Policy discussions have struggled to balance concerns about driver preparation standards and their potential impact on supply
- Consultation responses:
  - safety has to be paramount - unless safety issues associated with overseas licensed drivers are addressed, experienced Australian licensed drivers will depart the industry and this will have a more significant negative impact on driver supply
  - making it harder to get a heavy vehicle licence through increased standards and minimum requirements, will make the industry more attractive and valued as a career choice
  - lifting the standards and ‘bar’ for obtaining a heavy vehicle licence is particularly critical in attracting younger people who could be proud to say that they are a heavy vehicle driver, rather than it being a job you do when you can’t get anything else.





A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of a cluster of orange and green dots arranged in a pattern that resembles a stylized map of Australia.

**Next Steps**





# What Next?

- Planning implementation of revised HV driver training and assessment arrangements will continue for some time as jurisdictions consider how to put strengthened programs and standards in place.
- Development of online training delivery platforms and hazard perception testing are underway.
- Consideration of the policy options on management of overseas issued HV licences and industry responses to those are happening in parallel.







# What Next?

- State and territory licensing regulators have now received the findings of the industry consultation and are considering policy options in response.
- Options for managing overseas HV licences may well require legislative and/or regulatory reform.
- Industry engagement will continue to be a priority as these discussions move forward.
- Keep an eye on the project page as things progress
- <https://austroads.com.au/drivers-and-vehicles/overseas-drivers/overseas-driver-licensing-policy-review>







**Thank You**

