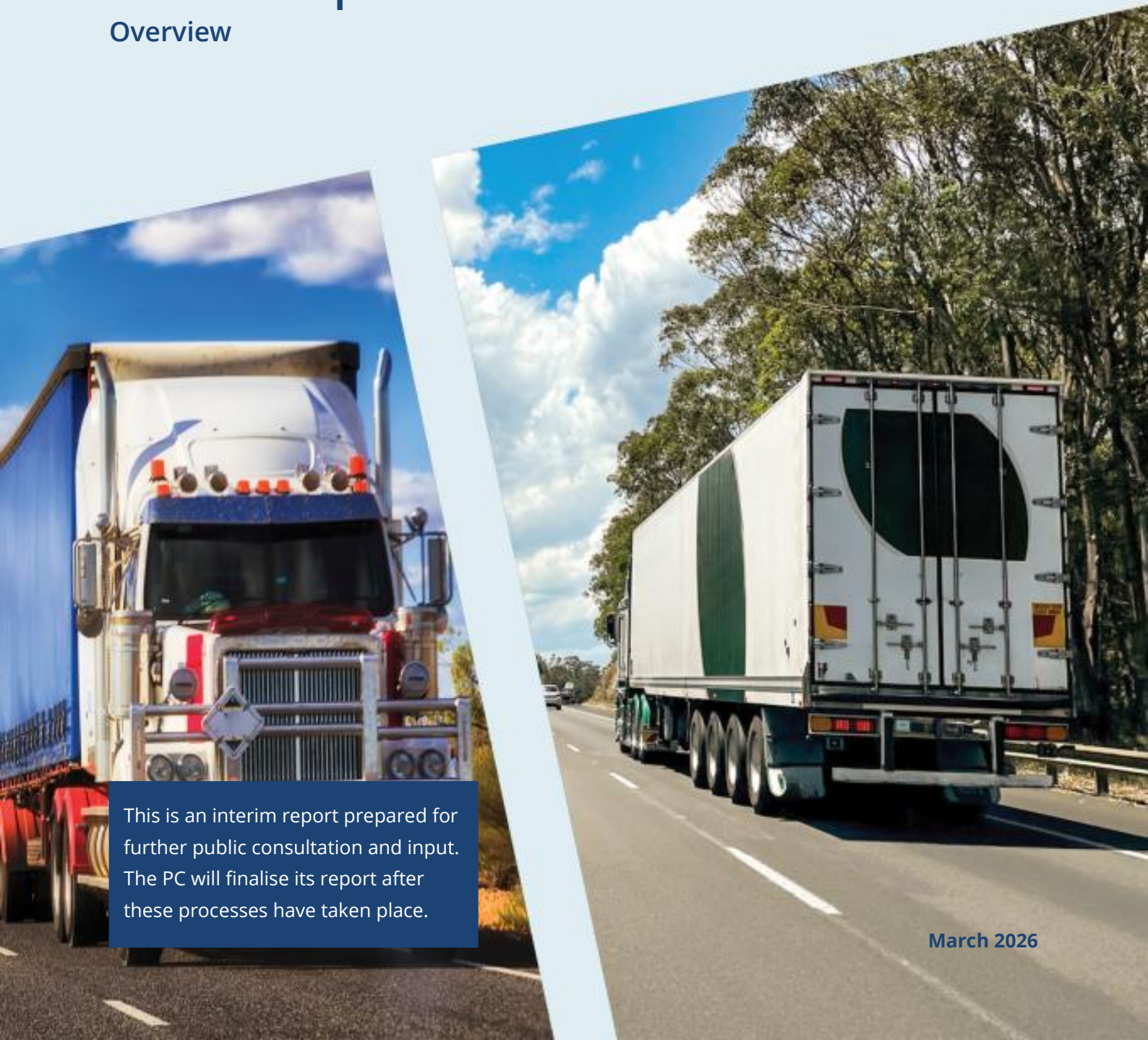




Impacts of heavy vehicle reform

Interim report

Overview



This is an interim report prepared for further public consultation and input. The PC will finalise its report after these processes have taken place.

Acknowledgement of Country



The Productivity Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their Cultures, Country and Elders past and present.

About us

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long-term interest of the Australian community.

The PC's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

For more information, visit the PC's website: www.pc.gov.au

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Publication enquiries:
Phone 03 9653 2244 | Email publications@pc.gov.au

Opportunity for comment

The PC thanks all participants for their contribution to this project so far and now seeks additional input for the final report.

You are invited to examine this interim report and comment on it by written submission or brief comment by 5 May 2026.

Further information on how to provide a submission or brief comment is included on the project's website: www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/heavy-vehicle-reform/

The PC will prepare the final report after further submissions have been received and it will hold further discussions with participants.

Commissioners

For the purposes of this study the Commissioners are:

Martin Stokie Commissioner

Barry Sterland Commissioner

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Overview

Key points

- * Heavy vehicle transport plays an important role in the Australian economy, but productivity growth in the road freight sector has stalled for over a decade.**
 - Advances in technology and vehicle design provide opportunities to re-start productivity growth and improve emissions outcomes, but reform is needed to enable this.
- * High productivity vehicles, heavy zero emissions vehicles, automated permits and telematics can support productivity uplift if deployed well. These opportunities will only be realised if all tiers of government collaborate to remove regulatory and other barriers to innovation and investment.**
 - Governments are working together on new national approaches, and individual jurisdictions are pursuing: reforms which demonstrate the application of new technologies for vehicle access; and updated regulation to recognise electric vehicle charging as an emerging form of land use.
 - However, more can be done to accelerate this work.
- * The largest potential productivity benefits will arise from reforms that increase access to Australia's road network for high productivity vehicles.**
 - Our early modelling suggests that access reforms could raise Australian GDP in the order of between 0.035% and 0.148%, or between \$950 million and \$4.0 billion, with negligible impacts on inflation.
 - Two reform areas – increasing heavy vehicle road access and establishing a National Automated Access System – can lead to productivity benefits. However, the size of their potential impact will depend on the scope and ambition of their design and implementation.
 - Reforms that work towards 'as-of-right' access – reducing the time and costs associated with applying for a permit for pre-approved vehicles driving on pre-approved roads – should be prioritised.
- * Adjusting curfews, aligning planning definitions and improving information will assist with the uptake of heavy zero emissions vehicles, complementing commercial, technological and emission policy drivers.**
- * Changes to heavy vehicle driver licence settings, including weight concessions for electric vehicles and strengthening recognition of overseas heavy vehicle licences, will help the net zero transition and heavy vehicle driver shortage.**
 - National driver competency reforms to improve safety and increase driver supply have been agreed, though implementation across jurisdictions will largely occur between 2026 and 2028.

Road freight productivity growth has stalled

Heavy vehicle transport is central to the day-to-day functioning of our economy. Almost all goods have been moved by heavy vehicles at least once, and often several times – from ports, farms and factories to distribution centres, shops and homes. Overall, the road transport sector and in-house road transport activity represent around 5% of Australian GDP.¹ The road transport sector alone employs 273,000 people.

¹ In-house transport activity is undertaken by non-transport industries in the economy.

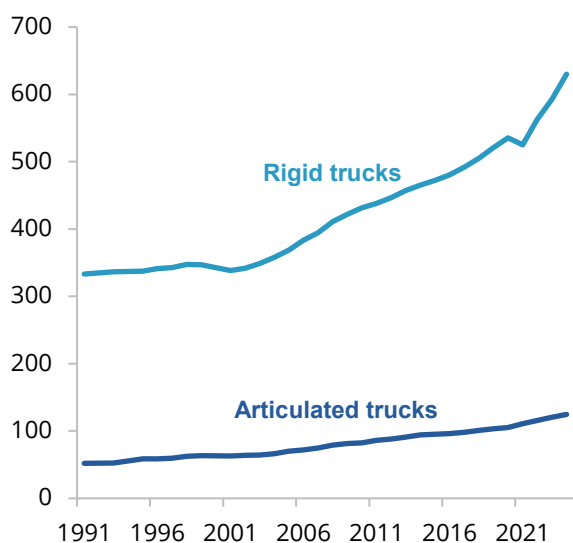
Historically, the physical productivity of road freight vehicles (proxied by a measure of average load mass) has gone through periods of significant growth. Between 1975 and 2009, the physical productivity of heavy freight vehicles increased considerably – with articulated trucks contributing most of this growth (figure 1). Past increases in productivity were associated with improvements such as increased B-double access to roads, which boosted payload capacity – the volume of goods trucks are able to transport on any given trip – by about 50% per vehicle kilometre without greatly increasing road wear.

However, over the past decade and a half, growth in the physical productivity of the road freight sector has effectively slowed to zero. There are a few possible reasons for this.

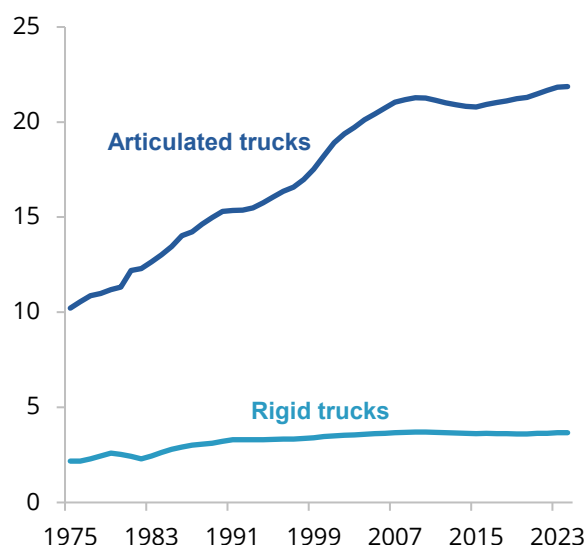
- Most of the growth in heavy vehicles has been in rigid trucks (figure 1), which typically carry less freight than articulated trucks – reflecting their suitability to ‘last mile’ delivery and certain business operations, such as direct delivery from manufacturers to end customers. Today, rigid trucks make up over 80% of the heavy vehicle freight fleet.
- Previous gains from increasing the capacity of articulated trucks cannot be replicated, as newer, larger heavy vehicle combinations offer smaller increases in payload.

Figure 1 – Heavy vehicle productivity and number of heavy vehicles

a. Number of heavy vehicles (000s)



b. Physical productivity (tonne kilometres per vehicle kilometre travelled)



The road freight task has grown in line with economic activity and the expansion of e-commerce. Despite continuing investments in alternative freight modes, demand for road freight is expected to grow by 77% in volume between 2020 and 2050, driven in part by a continued reliance on road vehicles for ‘last mile’ distribution.

Future productivity gains are likely to be more incremental and depend on smarter vehicle design and network use. However, a broader view of heavy vehicle transport performance is also important. This includes how effectively the sector uses capital, labour and energy, and the extent to which it reduces negative externalities, such as greenhouse gas emissions. From a whole-of-sector perspective, incremental gains in productivity will complement investments being made by users of freight services to optimise modal transport options, warehousing, distribution and supply chains.

Deploying new technologies can re-start growth

High productivity vehicles, heavy zero emissions vehicles, automated permits and telematics can all enable a productivity uplift if deployed well. But these opportunities will only be realised if governments collaborate to remove regulatory and other barriers to innovation and investment.

More needs to be done to ensure that regulatory settings and decision-making frameworks support optimal decision-making by both governments and heavy vehicle operators. Heavy vehicles represent significant, long-lived investments for freight operators, and fleet turnover occurs gradually. Australia's truck fleet has a median age of 15 years, which is significantly older than other OECD countries. Vehicle access to roads and design rules are also factors that can limit fleet transition. Right now, the safest, most productive and lowest emission heavy vehicles face more barriers to get on the road than a standard 'prescriptive' heavy vehicle. As a result, potential productivity gains and safety improvements may not be fully realised.

Opportunities to reduce emissions are also being missed – the Australian Government has a goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050, but some regulatory settings for heavy vehicles are actively working against this. In addition to supporting the transition to net zero, increasing fleet efficiency and the use of HZEVs can improve supply chain resilience and reduce the Australian economy's exposure to geopolitical and supply chain disruptions.

Governments are working together on new national approaches. For example, the National Automated Access System (NAAS) seeks to reduce the number of permits needed by heavy vehicle operators to access roads (and make it easier for operators to apply for any permits they do need). This has the potential to improve the productivity of the sector by reducing regulatory and administrative burden. Governments are also looking to introduce national consistency and higher standards of training and licensing through reforms to the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework, which are expected to improve the supply of safe and competent heavy vehicle drivers.

Individual jurisdictions are also pursuing reforms which are demonstrating the application of new technologies or regulatory approaches and are creating useful reference cases for national reforms. The Tasmanian Government developed its Heavy Vehicle Access Management System in 2016, which is now providing the foundation for the NAAS. In addition, the Victorian Government rolled out its Heavy Vehicle Structural Assessment Permit System this year, which allows manufacturers and operators to quickly assess whether their vehicles can safely operate over Victorian state bridges. Several state and territory governments have amended the definitions used for their service centres to include electric vehicle charging.

The PC is examining five heavy vehicle reform areas

The PC has been asked to provide analysis and modelling across five reform areas:

- increasing heavy vehicle road access to reduce emissions and increase productivity
- accelerating the establishment of a NAAS to streamline road access decision-making for all heavy vehicles
- removing administrative and regulatory barriers to improve the availability of heavy zero emissions vehicle charging infrastructure
- reducing or removing curfews for heavy zero emissions vehicles
- accelerating implementation of the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework.

The request for advice asks the PC to provide a detailed assessment of the economic and revenue impacts of each reform area – nationally and disaggregated by distributional groups, industries and levels of

government. In providing analysis and modelling, it has become clear that there are interlinkages and shared challenges and opportunities across most reform areas, and not all have the same potential to deliver productivity benefits.

The largest potential productivity benefits will arise from reforms that increase access to Australia's road network for high productivity vehicles. Two reform areas – increasing heavy vehicle road access and the establishment of the NAAS – can enable this. However, the size of their potential impact will depend on the scope and ambition of their design and implementation.

Reforms that work towards 'as-of-right' access – reducing the time and costs associated with applying for a permit for pre-approved vehicles driving on pre-approved roads – should be prioritised. Achieving 'as-of-right' access will depend on:

- improvements in the accuracy and comprehensiveness of information – about road quality, and culvert and bridge tolerances and conditions
- support from local road managers to allow greater access, while still managing risk
- funding arrangements that better align costs and benefits of heavy vehicle access and help to 'de-risk' provision of access, where it would generate net benefits.

There are also a number of reforms that can be sensibly considered 'without regret'. This includes simplifying vehicle approval processes and reducing jurisdictional variation that does not serve a clear purpose. For example, the Australian Government could assist with coordinating the introduction of additional mass allowances for electric heavy zero emissions vehicles across the country, with the potential for jurisdiction-level trials to provide an evidence base for a nationally consistent framework.

Road access settings need to better balance costs and benefits

The regulation of heavy vehicle road access plays an important role in ensuring that the costs associated with road use (including pavement wear and tear and impacts on congestion, amenity and safety) are managed. But the current settings do not support road managers to make optimal trade-offs between the benefits and costs of increasing access. As a result, business and industry face unnecessary costs (via permit processing time and restricted access), and governments, including local governments, are missing opportunities to reduce their administrative load.

Reforms are in train to expand general mass and dimension limits

Access reforms could improve productivity and reduce heavy vehicle-related road crashes and emissions by giving operators greater flexibility to plan their trips and investment decisions. One way to improve access is to increase the size of vehicles allowed on designated roads.

Proposed reforms to the Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation are expected to commence on 1 July 2026. These reforms include uplifting General Mass Limits to Concessional Mass Limits, and increasing general length and height limits.

Recent modelling has suggested that reforms to increase General Mass Limits could raise road freight sector productivity by between 1.0% and 3.2%, with the range reflecting the scale of the mass limit increases assumed across different scenarios. Enabling vehicles to carry more freight would mean that fewer total vehicle trips are required to move the same volume of freight. These economic benefits significantly

exceeded the additional costs of road maintenance (BITRE forthcoming). These modelling scenarios serve as a proxy for broader increases in heavy vehicle network access.

Improvements in the road freight sector have flow-on effects to the rest of the economy because road transport services are an input into many other industries. Using the above estimates as inputs for economy-wide modelling, our early results suggest that access reforms could raise Australian GDP in the order of between 0.035% and 0.148%, or between \$950 million and \$4.0 billion, with negligible impacts on inflation. These results are driven by different levels of reform ambition, with higher road transport productivity leading to fewer inputs for heavy vehicle operators to conduct their activities, lowering their prices and freeing labour and capital to be used by other domestic industries.

Expand access for high productivity vehicles

Expanding access for Performance-Based Standards (PBS) vehicles is another way to support a productivity uplift. PBS vehicles are designed to achieve higher productivity than their non-PBS equivalents, and have experienced strong uptake since the scheme was introduced in 2007, representing 21% of the road freight task in 2022. However, PBS vehicles often face greater barriers to access than non-PBS equivalents, despite meeting or exceeding the same safety requirements. Governments should streamline access and design approvals for common PBS vehicle configurations to further promote the uptake of these high productivity vehicles.

Road managers must be encouraged to support as-of-right access for PBS vehicles where it is safe to do so. Governments should enable eligible PBS vehicles to be added to existing gazetted authorisation notices for equivalent non-PBS vehicles without requiring a new notice. The PC is seeking feedback on how such a reform could be implemented.

Overcome the payload penalty for electric heavy vehicles

The uptake of heavy zero emissions vehicles will be vital for Australia to benefit from technological change and deliver significant transport emissions reductions. The Australian Government's *Transport and infrastructure net zero roadmap and action plan* provides a net zero pathway for heavy vehicles, with electrification playing a large role over the longer term. Fleet turnover occurs gradually and full mass market adoption of heavy zero emissions vehicles across segments is not expected to take place by for many years.

Electric heavy zero emissions vehicles are typically heavier than their diesel equivalents due to the additional weight of battery systems. While technological improvements and innovation may reduce battery weight over time, operators currently face a payload penalty – that is, reduced freight capacity within existing mass limits – which can limit uptake.

The technology and transport operations underpinning these vehicles are evolving, particularly in relation to electric batteries, charging infrastructure and vehicle design. In light of this, there is a case for allowing a degree of transitional tolerance in regulations to support early deployment. Some support for the initial uptake can help accelerate the development of supporting infrastructure and industry practices – including to accommodate charging requirements – which may otherwise not develop in a timely manner.

State and territory governments have introduced some additional mass allowances for heavy zero emission vehicles, but these arrangements differ across jurisdictions. The Australian Government can help play a coordinating role and, along with state and territory governments, work to embed a concessional mass limit in Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation to ensure electric heavy zero emissions vehicles can operate across Heavy Vehicle National Law jurisdictions without significant payload disadvantages from battery-related weights. The infrastructure impacts of a concessional mass limit for electric

heavy zero emissions vehicles are likely to be small in the immediate term, reflecting both the relatively slow pace of fleet turnover and the small share these vehicles currently account for in the heavy vehicle fleet.

These arrangements should be reassessed over time as batteries get lighter with technological change. An option is to schedule reviews to ensure the concession is set to keep pace with decreasing payload gaps. The PC is seeking feedback on the implementation of such a mass concession.

Getting the most out of the NAAS

There is also an opportunity to deliver faster, more consistent and more risk-based access decisions by automating approvals and, ideally, providing network-based access maps rather than case-by-case route permits through the planned roll-out of the NAAS.

The rollout is behind the original agreed targets and is difficult to accelerate given the scale and coordination required – particularly the need for local governments to assess and digitise road and bridge asset data. Extra funding and capability building may help but only up to a point, due to the capacity constraints in the system. Given these capacity constraints, getting NAAS design and national alignment right is critical to realising benefits. There is near-universal support for governments to continue to work towards implementing the NAAS to be like Tasmania's system. The benefits of the system would be maximised if:

- the NAAS adopted network-based access to give operators additional flexibility and support productivity
- states and territories adopted consistent access systems to reduce the burden on operators undertaking interstate trips
- the design of the NAAS maximised the consistency and quality of local government decision-making on access.

Regulation has not caught up with electric vehicles

Heavy zero emissions vehicles have the potential to fundamentally change large-scale heavy vehicle operations by reducing the noise, air pollution and emissions costs associated with internal combustion engines. As part of the broader net zero transition, the Australian Government anticipates widespread decarbonisation of heavy vehicles in coming decades alongside improvements in technology and reductions in vehicle costs. As these changes occur, administrative and regulatory settings affecting charging infrastructure and curfews must keep up.

Reduce administrative and regulatory barriers to heavy zero emissions vehicle charging infrastructure

To be commercially successful, heavy zero emissions vehicles are likely to require:

- chargers located in freight centres (depots, distribution hubs and major warehouses), freight nodes (airports, ports and intermodal terminals) and heavy vehicle rest stops (rest areas and service centres along highways)
- different charging infrastructure from passenger electric vehicles (EVs) – in particular, more powerful chargers and layouts that accommodate their size.

The most significant challenge for the rollout of this charging infrastructure is establishing connections to electricity networks, as high-powered charging can require costly and time-consuming network augmentation. The administrative and regulatory barriers (the focus of this study) are minor by comparison, but important to

address so that they do not create hold-ups once broader policy, market and technological developments are in place to drive the rollout forwards.

One such administrative barrier is that information to inform site selection is not always easily accessible. The Australian Government recently launched the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Mapping Tool to guide the location of charging investment, but it is missing information of high relevance to heavy zero emissions vehicle charging infrastructure – granular electricity network capacity data, data on where trucks can and do travel, and whether zoning allows for charging. The Australian Government should work with data custodians to include this data in the mapping tool. It should also allow mapping tool data to be exported.

Land use regulation is a potential regulatory barrier to charging infrastructure. Not all planning schemes have been updated to reflect this new type of infrastructure, which creates uncertainty and needlessly bespoke processes. State and territory governments should:

- redefine land use terms to explicitly allow charging at bus depots, freight centres, freight nodes and heavy vehicle rest stops
- tweak existing planning permission exemptions for charger installations to accommodate simple heavy zero emissions vehicle charger installations or adopt such planning permission exemptions if not already in place.

While much charging will be installed on privately owned or managed land, state and territory governments will need to more actively facilitate charging infrastructure investment at government-provided heavy vehicle rest areas. The PC is seeking participants' views on how governments can best facilitate private investment in charging infrastructure at these locations.

Reduce curfew burdens on heavy zero emissions vehicles

In addition to regulatory barriers to charging infrastructure, other regulations, originally designed for internal combustion vehicles, can also limit heavy zero emissions vehicle operation. Two main sets of instruments (commonly referred to as curfews), prohibit the activity of heavy vehicles at certain times, with the aim of preserving neighbourhood amenity:

- local traffic controls restricting the movement of through traffic on a particular road. These are administered by state or local governments (or both), depending on the road, and apply to all heavy vehicles above a specified weight limit (including General Access Vehicles)
- local government planning restrictions set out in planning permits, such as restrictions on overnight truck deliveries to supermarkets.

Presently, no type of curfew distinguishes between internal combustion engine vehicles and heavy zero emissions vehicles.

There is a strong case for reducing the burden of curfews on heavy zero emissions vehicles in some form. While regulation should continue to aim to mitigate the impacts of heavy vehicle noise and protect community safety, heavy zero emissions vehicles are significantly quieter. There are several options to reform regulation to take into account the noise and other benefits of heavy zero emissions vehicles, each with different costs and benefits.

- Heavy zero emissions vehicle could be exempted from curfews, or curfews that apply to them could be made less restrictive (such as by allowing longer delivery hours).
- Vehicles could receive differential treatment if they meet certain performance-based criteria, such as verified low-noise performance.
- Curfews could be replaced entirely with outcome-based measures, such as evidence-based decibel limits.

The PC is seeking information on the practicality of implementing these different approaches.

Current reforms will improve driver capability

Current heavy vehicle driver training, assessment and licensing processes are poorly calibrated to the risks and priorities of the sector. Industry has reported that time-based licence progression has prevented drivers from entering the occupation and progressing to higher productivity heavy vehicles at a time of significant driver shortage. Industry also suggest that poor training and assessment requirements fail to deliver competent drivers and safe outcomes. Inconsistency across states and territories also adds costs for operators and training providers working across jurisdictions.

National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework reforms, endorsed in 2023, are set to expand driver competency and training minimums, create new licensing pathways based on experience and supervision, and support best practice training and assessment. The reforms aim to improve safety and national consistency. There is also the potential for small productivity gains from faster licence progression to higher productivity vehicles and fewer heavy vehicle crashes, although other factors may have offsetting effects.

Implementation is underway, with most jurisdictions expected to roll out reforms between 2026 and 2028, but regulatory, IT, funding and capacity constraints mean faster acceleration is unlikely. Some jurisdictions will implement sooner while others are being delayed by ongoing decision-making. Certainty about reform details and funding, expected around mid-2026, should progress decision-making. There are already funding mechanisms in place through the National Competition Policy framework for the Australian Government to support state and territory governments to implement the reforms, with specific funding amounts to be determined. Implementation aimed towards full completion by the 2028 timeline should continue as planned and would be supported by confirmation of funding amounts to state and territories.

Other licensing issues warrant attention to better align the driver competency reforms with policy priorities. These include: considering weight concessions for electric vehicles in driver licence classes to allow drivers to operate equivalent electric heavy vehicles without sacrificing payload; and strengthening recognition of overseas heavy vehicle driver licences to bolster driver supply. The PC is seeking feedback on these potential reform directions.

Draft recommendations, findings and information requests

Context for heavy vehicle reform



Information request 1.1

The PC is seeking evidence and views about how the package of heavy vehicle reforms examined in this study may impact:

- different cohorts, including by age, gender, income and education, and any other relevant demographic classification (including impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people)
- consumers, including in ways that may be difficult to quantify, such as improved quality of service or wellbeing, or greater choice.

Access for high productivity and heavy zero emissions vehicles



Information request 2.1

The PC is seeking feedback on how proposed reforms to the Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation (expected to commence on 1 July 2026) will affect access. These reforms include uplifting General Mass Limits to Concessional Mass Limits, increasing general length limits from 19 m to 20 m and increasing general height limits from 4.3 m to 4.6 m.

- What implications would these reforms have for high productivity and heavy zero emissions vehicles?
- Will these reforms create any unintended consequences? What effect will they have on the interoperability of heavy vehicles with existing trailers, equipment and loading infrastructure?



Draft finding 2.1

Access reforms can unlock the benefits of a modern fleet

Growth in heavy vehicle productivity can be constrained by factors that restrict access, including:

- the reliance on permit-based access, limited flexibility in the application of access rules and inconsistency across jurisdictions
- a lack of harmonisation between domestic standards and international standards, which can limit the importation and use of modern technologies
- a mismatch between who benefits from heavy vehicle road access and who bears the costs of maintenance and infrastructure upgrades, which can reduce incentives to provide access.

The Australian, state and territory governments can play a central role in promoting better access outcomes, particularly where they are able to:

- promote as-of-right access by expanding general access and notices, with regulatory settings that can be applied flexibly and consistently across jurisdictions
- support fleet transition by ensuring vehicle design and access rules enable the uptake of innovative technologies, including by aligning domestic standards more closely to international standards
- move towards better aligning who benefits from heavy vehicle access with funding arrangements for those who bear the costs of maintenance and infrastructure upgrades.



Draft recommendation 2.1

Allow greater as-of-right access and simpler vehicle approvals for Performance-Based Standards (PBS) vehicles

State, territory and local governments should support as-of-right access for PBS vehicles where it is safe to do so. Road managers should provide in-principle consent for as-of-right access for PBS vehicles (which have met safety and infrastructure requirements) that is at least equal to access for equivalent non-PBS vehicles. Governments should enable eligible PBS vehicles to be added to existing gazetted access notices without requiring a new notice.

In addition, the National Transport Commission should amend the Heavy Vehicle National Law to remove the requirement to refer all PBS design approval applications to the PBS Review Panel for advice.



Information request 2.2

The PC is seeking feedback on how the Performance-Based Standards (PBS) scheme can be improved and enable greater as-of-right access for PBS vehicles over time. We are also interested in views around how the Australian Government can best support this process.

- Could there be any unintended impacts arising from not requiring the PBS Review Panel to provide advice on all PBS design applications? What types of PBS design applications should still require panel advice?

The PC is also seeking feedback on implementation issues, including how a pathway to add eligible PBS vehicles to existing notices (with in-principle road manager consent) could be embedded in legislation.

- How should the mechanism be designed and implemented? Why?
 - What amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law or related regulations would be required?
 - Are amendments to the PBS classification system required?
 - How should amendments be implemented to ensure eligible PBS vehicles can be added to existing notices without having to get access approvals, while ensuring existing access arrangements previously agreed by road managers are preserved?
 - What criteria should PBS combinations fulfil to be eligible to be added to existing notices? Which specific PBS combinations should be prioritised? On what basis?
 - What safeguards, monitoring or review mechanisms would be required to ensure the approach maintains road safety and protects infrastructure?



Draft recommendation 2.2

A nationally-consistent concessional mass limit for electric heavy zero emissions vehicles (HZEVs)

The Australian, state and territory governments should – through the National Transport Commission – work to embed a concessional mass limit in the Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation to ensure electric HZEVs can operate across jurisdictions without significant payload disadvantages arising from battery weights.

These arrangements should be reassessed over time as batteries get lighter with technological change. An option is for governments to implement a transparent review mechanism every three years which monitors the development of electric HZEVs and the interaction with road wear to ensure the concession is set appropriately. The review mechanism should monitor the following areas:

- the payload gap between comparable diesel heavy vehicles and electric HZEVs
- how international jurisdictions are setting concessional mass limits for electric HZEVs.

The concession should sunset following a positive review determination that the payload gap between comparable diesel and electric HZEVs has materially closed.

**Information request 2.3**

The PC is seeking feedback on implementation of a nationally-consistent mass concession for electric heavy zero emissions vehicles (HZEVs).

- How should a concessional mass limit to overcome the current payload gap between comparable diesel and electric HZEVs be implemented?
 - What should the size of the concessional mass limit be?
 - What are the outcomes and learnings that have come out of the trial-based concessional electric HZEVs mass limit arrangements?
 - How should the mass concession interact with the Performance-Based Standard scheme, including new and/or existing permits? What are the merits and downsides of the different options?
 - Are there any additional changes or approvals required to ensure operators can make use of the mass concession?
 - Are there cases where the concession should not be automatically applied? Why?
 - Is a three-yearly review process appropriate? What benchmarks should be considered in the review process?
- What are the expected impacts of applying the mass concession?
 - To what extent would changes assist and/or accelerate the uptake of uptake of electric HZEVs?
 - What road wear impacts will this have at anticipated take up rates?

Accelerating a National Automated Access System

**Draft finding 3.1****The existing permit system for heavy vehicle access is ripe for reform**

The heavy vehicle permit system imposes significant costs and uncertainty on operators, as well as administrative burden on road managers and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. There is a need to reform the system to promote flexibility, timeliness, consistency and quality of access decisions – this will support broader productivity.

**Draft recommendation 3.1****The National Automated Access System should incorporate network-based access**

As much as possible, the National Automated Access System should be designed to provide network-based access rather than automating access for prescriptive routes. This will maximise the benefits of the system for operators and the community.



Information request 3.1

The PC is seeking evidence and views about how the National Automated Access System can be designed to improve the consistency and quality of local governments' access decisions. Is guidance and improved road asset data adequate, or are broader reforms needed to optimise decision making by local governments?



Information request 3.2

- What are the factors affecting implementation of the National Automated Access System? What are the main resource constraints (for example, skilled people, data and information or equipment), and what parts of the implementation do they affect?
- What would be the best way to accelerate rollout of the National Automated Access System? If more funding is needed, where should it be directed and what should it be spent on?



Draft recommendation 3.2

Funding for the Strategic Local Government Asset Assessment Project

The Australian Government should fund future phases of the Strategic Local Government Asset Assessment Project, starting with Phase 4 in the 2027-28 Budget.

Administrative and regulatory barriers to charging infrastructure



Draft recommendation 4.1

Make the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Mapping Tool more relevant to heavy zero emissions vehicle (HZEV) charging

To make the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Mapping Tool more useful to guide investments in HZEV charging infrastructure, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water should:

- work with electricity distribution network service providers and the Australian Energy Regulator to incorporate more granular (distribution substation-level) distribution network capacity information
- work with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to incorporate information on freight locations and movements
- work with state and territory governments to incorporate information on where charging is an allowed land use (with and without planning permission)
- allow all mapping data to be exported.

**Draft recommendation 4.2****Adapt land use regulation to heavy zero emissions vehicle charging infrastructure**

State and territory governments should alter the definitions of land uses that cover bus depots, freight centres, freight nodes and heavy vehicle rest stops to explicitly allow for electric vehicle charging on land used in this way.

State and territory governments should exempt the installation of charging infrastructure from requiring planning permission where it is consistent with existing land use provisions. To the extent that jurisdictions apply conditions to manage any public impact, these should be balanced against potential impacts on innovation and investment.

**Information request 4.1**

How much would draft recommendations 4.1 and 4.2 reduce administrative and regulatory barriers to heavy zero emissions vehicle charging infrastructure and what implications would this have for project costs?

**Information request 4.2**

What regulatory or administrative actions should governments take (if any) to facilitate private investment in charging infrastructure at state and territory government-provided heavy vehicle rest areas?

Heavy vehicle curfews

**Information request 5.1**

The PC is seeking information on the prevalence of curfews. How widespread are local government restrictions through local planning rules? What are the typical terms of these restrictions? If they exist, what are the typical reasons (noise or other reasons)?



Draft finding 5.1

There is a strong case for reducing curfew burdens on heavy zero emissions vehicles

Heavy vehicle curfews largely arise from two sources – local traffic controls that restrict truck traffic through particular streets, and conditions imposed on local government planning permits that restrict delivery hours to and from businesses. Local traffic controls appear to exist almost exclusively in Victoria, while planning restrictions appear more widespread.

Many curfews were designed for conventional diesel vehicles and do not recognise the quieter noise profile of heavy zero emissions vehicles. As a result, some curfews are no longer fit for purpose, and there is a strong case for reducing curfew burdens on heavy zero emissions vehicles.



Information request 5.2

The PC is seeking information to illustrate the costs and benefits of reducing curfews on heavy zero emissions vehicles and the costs and benefits of possible approaches to reform, along with their implementation.

- What are the practical options for implementing exemptions for heavy zero emissions vehicles from curfews? If vehicles were to be exempted by heavy zero emissions vehicle status – how would this distinction be made and enforced?
- How would a performance-based approach work in practice, and what would be the associated costs?
- What would be the practical costs associated with implementing an outcomes-based approach to regulating noise?
- What would be the most effective means of implementing reform? What should be the respective roles of the Australian Government, state and territory and local governments?

The National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework



Draft finding 6.1

Driver competency reforms are progressing

Reforms to the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework appear on track to be implemented by most states and territories by 2028. Some states and territory governments may be able to deliver earlier under current arrangements. Others are not expecting to implement the reforms within the 2028 timeframe, with some still uncertain if they will be implemented in full. Support to implement changes, including to undertake regulatory reform, policy work and IT systems updates, may aid implementation.



Information request 6.1

The PC is seeking information on:

- the potential size of the costs and benefits, including the productivity effects, arising from the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework reforms and if there are any costs and benefits not identified in this report
- how the costs and benefits of National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework reform might be distributed across the workforce, including by age, gender, income and education, and any other relevant demographic classification (including impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).



Information request 6.2

The PC is seeking feedback on future reform directions for the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework, including:

- weight concessions in Australian licence classes to create parity between payloads for electric and diesel heavy vehicles and any safety implications of such a concession
- recognition of the credentials, skills and experience of drivers with overseas heavy vehicle licences within Australia's licensing system, considering the effects on safety, driver supply and productivity.

