

Overtaking lanes

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is committed to creating a safe and efficient road network and undertakes ongoing assessment to identify where overtaking lanes need to be installed to improve traffic flow and driver safety.

“ There are currently 198* overtaking lanes along the Bruce Highway.

Why are overtaking lanes provided?

Provision of adequate overtaking opportunities is an essential part of the efficient operation of two-lane, two-way roads. When roads are designed, consideration is given to the need for overtaking opportunities. This includes ensuring adequate sight distances and assessing the anticipated level of traffic on the road.

Overtaking opportunities can present as either:

1. Dedicated overtaking lanes with the relevant road markings.
2. Climbing or descending lanes on steep uphill or downhill roads with heavy vehicles which are slow moving on steep roads.
3. Informal opportunities where the gaps in opposing traffic flow and sight distance allow for safe overtaking.

As traffic increases over time, informal overtaking opportunities gradually reduce even if the sight distance is adequate. As a result of this, long queues of vehicles caused by slow moving vehicles can form.

In these situations, provision of an overtaking lane is considered, subject to available funding, to break up the queue and improve traffic flow. These overtaking lanes can provide a safer overtaking opportunity and can be a cost effective way of facilitating better traffic flow.

Potential benefits of overtaking lanes

- Improved overtaking opportunities on highways.
- Improved traffic flow and travel times.
- Reduced driver frustration.
- Improved road safety.

When can I overtake another vehicle?

Motorists can only overtake another vehicle if they have a clear view of any approaching traffic, can do so safely and all road markings and signs allow overtaking. You must also give way to any vehicle in the lane you are changing into.

“ It is never legal to exceed the speed limit to overtake another vehicle. Always leave a safe gap of at least two seconds between you and the vehicle you have overtaken – more for heavy vehicles. Remember to exercise patience and courtesy when driving.

Can I cross the centre line (into the oncoming traffic lane) to overtake a vehicle?

Yes, as long as it is safe to do so motorists can cross:

- broken centre lines
- broken wide centre lines
- broken centre lines to the left of a single continuous line
- broken wide centre lines to the left of a continuous centre line.

It is illegal to cross a continuous single line, continuous double line or continuous wide centre line to overtake another vehicle, unless you are passing a bicycle rider.

* Correct as at 2017.



Overtaking lane signage

When driving, you may see the following overtaking signs on Queensland roads.



Overtaking lane ahead

These signs advise motorists of an upcoming overtaking lane. They increase road safety by allowing motorists to relax their search for an informal overtaking opportunity, knowing that a dedicated overtaking lane is approaching.



Keep left unless overtaking

A 'Keep left unless overtaking' sign requires all drivers, including drivers of slow moving vehicles, to keep in the left lane, allowing other vehicles to overtake them in the right lane. All vehicles must keep to the left lane unless they are:

- overtaking
- making a right hand turn
- avoiding an obstruction
- driving in congested traffic
- driving in a special purpose lane they are allowed to be in.



Left lane ends

'Left lane ends' and 'Merge right' signs provide advance warning for drivers that traffic will need to merge with traffic in the continuing lane. You must also give way to any vehicle in the lane you are moving into. It may not be safe to overtake when you are in the left hand lane and you see these signs as your lane will be ending soon and you may not have enough space to overtake.