Higher Mass Limits (HML) is part of Queensland’s commitment to the further efficiency of transport. HML reduces the number of heavy vehicles required to move the same amount of freight, leading to a reduction in transport costs, congestion, infrastructure wear and vehicle emissions.

The use of HML was first introduced to Queensland on 2 July 1999, initially on:
- the former National Highway System: and
- connecting 23 and 25 metre B-double and road train routes within a radial distance of not more than 500m from the former National Highway System.

In December 2002, a policy framework was introduced that allowed additional routes following agreement from asset owners.

From 1 October 2006 the State Government 23 and 25 metre B-double and road train network was opened up to HML access to the first vulnerable infrastructure asset. The expansion is in accordance with the AusLink Bilateral Infrastructure Funding Agreement between the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments covering the period 2004-05 to 2008-09.

The expansion of HML access is balanced by additional responsibilities for the road freight industry. The responsibilities are designed to ensure vulnerable infrastructure (bridges, culverts, and pavements) remains protected through heeding mass limits, maintaining route compliance and ensuring on-going road-friendliness of suspensions.

In Queensland, these responsibilities are monitored through the Intelligent Access Program (IAP). The IAP is a national scheme and in Queensland it is an initiative of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

The IAP is a mandatory requirement for vehicles to operate at HML since 1 July 2009. It uses vehicle telematics, which includes a combination of global positioning systems, in-vehicle sensors and other communications technology, to remotely monitor compliance with agreed access conditions.

These access conditions describe the constraints which vehicles operating at HML are to adhere to, for example, what roads they can travel on, and when they can travel. Non-compliance is reported by certified Service Providers to relevant road authorities. Refer to the particular section of this document titled "Intelligent Access Program" for further information.

In June 2010, the HML policy framework in relation to approving additional HML routes was amended. The current framework for additional route eligibility no longer requires the route to be a B-double route as a pre-requisite. Therefore, operators may seek HML route approval for non B-double routes. However, road network access is still governed by the particular vehicle combination being used. If a route is not a B-double route and has been approved for HML, access is limited to “general access” type vehicles e.g. semitrailers, trucks.
Please note that travel at HML on routes other than those approved for HML is an offence that attracts severe penalties.

What is Higher Mass Limits?

HML allows for increases to general axle mass limits provided the vehicle is operated in accordance with the conditions as detailed in the *Guideline for Increased Mass Limits for Vehicles with Road Friendly Suspensions - Form Number 10*.

The increases in axle mass limits for vehicles fitted with road friendly suspensions are summarised as follows:

- 0.5 tonne increase on tandem axle groups fitted with 8 tyres, to 17.0 tonnes;
- 2.5 tonne increase on triaxle groups with 12 tyres, to 22.5 tonnes; and
- 1.0 tonne increase on six-tyred tandem axles, to 14 tonnes.


For the purpose of these arrangements, a road friendly suspension for vehicles built before 1 January 2000 and are currently registered, is considered to be any suspension system that uses air bags in combination with effective hydraulic dampers, with the air bags being the principal suspension medium.

For vehicles manufactured on or after 1 January 2000, only suspensions tested and certified as road friendly by DOITRDALG are eligible to operate under HML. While air suspensions are the most common, other innovative suspensions have been certified as meeting the road friendly suspension standards.

Verification of this certification, in the form of a certificate label, must be fitted on or near the vehicle’s suspension or a copy of a letter from the vehicle or suspension manufacturer stating the suspension is certified as road friendly must be carried in the vehicle and produced to an Authorised Officer when requested.

Individual suspensions on every vehicle or trailer need not be tested and certified as road friendly – only those axle groups operating at HML. A list of certified suspensions is available at [www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/vehicle regulation/suspension.aspx](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/vehicle regulation/suspension.aspx).

To obtain more information on road friendly suspensions, contact DOITRDALG on (02) 62747111 or email to [www.dotars.gov.au/utilities/contact.aspx](http://www.dotars.gov.au/utilities/contact.aspx).
Requirements for use of Higher Mass Limits

The requirements for HML are as follows:

- The manufacturer’s gross vehicle mass as shown on the compliance plate must not be exceeded.
- Individual loads must not exceed the manufacturer's specified component limits.
- Your vehicle must have road friendly suspension on any axle group carrying the extra mass (HML applies to any individual road friendly axle group - all axle groups on a vehicle or combination do not need to be road friendly).
- You must be accredited under the Mass Management Module of National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme (NHVAS) if your vehicle has a triaxle group.
- Operators of HML vehicles must ensure that their vehicles operate only on approved routes and comply with relevant mass limits.
- Vehicle operators and drivers must be able to provide evidence to enforcement officers that the vehicle is eligible to operate at HML. This evidence comprises:
  - confirmation that the suspension system is certified road friendly and if requested must provide evidence to this effect,
  - the correct code on the vehicle registration label, where provided by the relevant jurisdiction; and
  - for triaxle vehicles, an officially numbered ‘Accredited Operator’ label affixed to the right hand side of the driver's cabin, indicating membership of the Mass Management Module of the NHVAS.

Operators and drivers that breach these requirements could be prosecuted for exceeding mass limits and other offences and could be excluded from operating in the Mass Management Module of the NHVAS.

An additional requirement to continue operating at HML in Queensland from 1 July 2009 is participation in the Intelligent Access Program (IAP).

Refer to the particular sections of this document for further information.

Which types of vehicles are eligible for the Higher Mass Limits?

In accordance with the operating conditions contained in the HML Guideline, the following classes of vehicle or vehicle combinations are eligible for these mass increases:

- tandem drive rigid trucks and prime movers;
- tandem and triaxle semitrailers;
- tandem and triaxle dolly trailers;
- road trains; and
- B-doubles.

HML applies to axle groups rather than the vehicle. It is possible to have a vehicle combination that is made up of a road friendly axle group that is loaded to the higher limit and a non-road friendly axle group that is loaded to the regulatory limit.
Excluded Vehicles

Particular classes of vehicles that are not included in HML are:

- truck and dog trailer combinations;
- truck and pig trailer combinations;
- pig trailers (except converter dollies used in multi-combinations);
- single drive axle trucks;
- single axle trailers;
- vehicles which operate under permit for excess dimension or mass; and
- vehicles operating under mass concession schemes or guidelines that allow above regulatory mass limits.

Mass Management Accreditation

Operators of triaxle vehicles wishing to operate at HML must be accredited under the Mass Management Module of the NHVAS or another scheme approved/recognised by DTMR.

Under the Mass Management Module, operators are required to develop appropriate management practices and a system that measures and records the weight of their vehicles when they are loaded. Details of NHVAS are described in DTMR’s NHVAS - Mass Management Guide, available at www.tmr.qld.gov.au/nhvas.

The accreditation involves arranging for an entry audit of systems used by the operator to ensure all of the nominated vehicles do not exceed the relevant mass limits. The auditor must be certified by the Quality Society of Australasia and have completed the NHVAS one-day auditor training course.

Upon receiving a successful audit report, the operator or his/her agent must present the relevant application form signed by the auditor, together with proof of identification regarding the operator’s personal details to a relevant jurisdiction offering accreditation into a Mass Management Accreditation Scheme.

Upon accreditation, operators will be issued with identification labels for approved vehicles in their fleet. This accreditation will be dependent upon operators continuing to meet their obligations under the Mass Management Accreditation Scheme. The labels are to be removed upon sale of the vehicle or trailer, or if mass accreditation is revoked. Any mass offences recorded against an accredited operator could jeopardise the operator’s membership in the scheme and therefore their ability to operate at HML.

It should be noted that accreditation under a Mass Management Accreditation Scheme will not exempt operators from conventional enforcement procedures.

Intelligent Access Program

Participation in the IAP is available in Queensland for operation on the HML network and is a mandatory requirement for both existing and new HML operators since 1 July 2009.

It is important to remember that is the responsibility of a transport operator to ensure that their chosen service provider is certified by the TCA. A contract with a certified service provider is essential for participation in IAP.

Transport operators seeking further information about the IAP in Queensland, or those wishing to enrol, can find all the required information at the Department of Transport and Main Roads website www.tmr.qld.gov.au/iap or can call the IAP Hotline on 1300 753 427^ (1300 QLD IAP).
In addition, important information can be found on both the Transport Certification Australia Limited website www.tca.gov.au and the IAP website www.iap.gov.au.

**In-Service Maintenance of Road-Friendly Suspensions**

Ensuring the ongoing road friendliness of suspensions is essential to expansion of the HML network. This means that road friendly suspensions must remain compliant with in-service maintenance standards.

The vehicle’s suspension must be maintained to ensure it operates in accordance with the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme Mass Management suspension maintenance standards for road friendly suspension.

**Approved Routes**


Vehicles may also operate on connecting B-double (23 and 25 metre) and road train routes to a radial distance of 500m from Queensland’s Major Highway System.

Queensland’s HML maps do not illustrate the type of vehicle that applies to each route. When operating at higher mass limits, operators must ensure that the higher mass limit route is approved for their particular vehicle combination:

- road trains operating at higher mass limit weights can only operate on approved road train routes (as per the Multi-combination Approved Routes – any conditions applied to the route must be adhered to).
- B-doubles operating at higher mass limit weights can only operate on approved road train and B-double routes (as per the Multi-combination Approved Routes – any conditions applied to the route must be adhered to).

Operators of multi-combination vehicles are able to confirm regulation mass routes by referring to the *Guideline for Multi-combination Vehicles (Road Trains, B-doubles, B-triples, AB-triples, BAB Quads, ABB Quads) in Queensland - Form 1.*

Once the regulation mass route is confirmed for the particular vehicle, the route can then be determined as HML approved, by checking whether the route is identified on the HML maps.

**Additional Routes**

Additional expansion of the HML road network is expected to continue at a steady rate as vulnerable assets are removed from the system through the routine rollout of the Roads Implementation Program. The extent of non-routine vulnerable asset removal is subject to agreement being reached between the Queensland and Federal Governments.

Operator requested expansions are therefore only likely to refer to local government roads.

Where an operator wishes to seek expanded HML access, the following conditions apply:

- The applicant is to obtain agreement from all local asset owners (e.g. local councils, Queensland Rail) for the use of HML vehicle(s) on their assets on a route-by-route basis.
- The asset owner in assessing the route is to examine it to ensure there are no vulnerable assets (such as bridges, culverts, and pavements) present.
• The asset owner is to notify the applicant of agreement or non-agreement of their route application in writing. If agreement is reached, the written correspondence from the asset owner must give details of the following:
  - primary type of vehicle approved for use on route
  - details of route (including map and descriptions)
• On agreement with asset owners, the applicant is then to submit a fully completed HML Route Extension Application Form (Form F4166) to the Department of Transport and Main Roads, together with all applicable agreement letters and attachments from asset owners. Applications that are not complete will be returned to the applicant. Application forms are available on the Department of Transport and Main Road’s HML webpage or any Customer Service Centre.
• The Department of Transport and Main Roads will carry out an assessment of the application and will then advise the applicant of the approval or non-approval of the route.
• If approved, the Department of Transport and Main Roads will update the maps of the approved routes.
• The new route will be available to all HML vehicles when the updated maps are published on the Department of Transport and Main Roads website.
• No interim permits will be issued.

Operating in Other States

Although HML is available nationally, each State or Territory has a differing road network. Operating requirements may also differ between jurisdictions.

Operators should check with the authorities in any other State or Territory through which you intend to travel before loading at HML.

Enforcement

The HML Guideline relies upon operators adhering to the conditions imposed by the guideline. Failure to do so could result in significant damage to road infrastructure, particularly bridges.

It should be noted the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 allows for operators to be liable for any damage caused to road transport infrastructure.

Accordingly, operators can expect that there will be appropriate monitoring of compliance to the HML Guideline (in addition to mandatory participation in IAP from 1 July 2009). Drivers and operators who do not comply with the HML Guideline can expect to face severe penalties.

Penalties for operating vehicles at masses exceeding those permitted under the guidelines may also result in operators being excluded from the Mass Management Accreditation Scheme and the IAP and therefore unable to qualify for HML.

Further Information

This information is a general interpretation of your legal obligations. It is a guide only and should not be used as a reference to any point of law. Reference must be made to the Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Mass, Dimension and Loading) Regulation 2005 and the Guidelines for Increased Mass Limits for Vehicles with Road Friendly Suspension - Form Number 10, for a precise interpretation of legal obligations.

Further information about HML in Queensland can be obtained by contacting the Department of Transport and Main Roads on 13 23 80.
Further information on IAP is available from the Department of Transport and Main Roads website:

Or email the Intelligent Access Branch at: Intelligent.access.program@tmr.qld.gov.au

Or phone: 1300 753 427 (1300 QLD IAP).

Transport Certification Australia:  http://www.iap.gov.au

^1300 numbers - Higher rates apply from mobile phones. Service operates Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm EST (GMT +10) excluding public holidays.