

Road Transport (Dimensions and Mass) Act 1990

**62.5 Tonne B-Double,
4.6 Metre High Vehicles, and
14.5 Metre Long Bus
Exemption Notice**

**Instrument No. 330 OF 2000
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

The *Road Transport (Dimensions and Mass) Act 1990* ('the Act') governs the operation of heavy vehicles in the ACT. In particular, Part IV of the Act deals with access to the road network for heavy vehicles and vehicle combinations that exceed standard mass and dimension limits.

The Act was amended in 1996 to give effect nationally agreed standards and simplified administrative procedures for regulating the dimensions and mass of heavy vehicles, pending the full implementation of nationally uniform road transport legislation.

Section 31A of the Act enables the Minister to issue notices exempting specified classes of vehicles or combinations from any or all of the normal requirements of Part II of the Act (relating to vehicle dimension and design) or Part III (relating to loads and equipment). The same section also allows the Minister to exempt specified classes of persons from having to comply with Section 37 which prohibits driving certain types of vehicle combinations in the ACT.

Section 31A of the *Road Transport (Dimensions and Mass) Act 1990* defines that this exemption notice is a disallowable instrument for the purposes of section 10 of the Subordinate Laws Act 1989.

The ability to exempt not just individual vehicles but whole classes of vehicles or combinations from particular requirements of the Act is central to the national transport reform process.

Accordingly, under the provisions of the Act, the original *62.5 Tonne B-Double Exemption Notice* was commenced on 15 January 1998, to remain in force until 31 December 2001.

Following the introduction of this exemption notice, it was considered timely to review the routes in light of better information on several bridges. As a consequence, several additional routes have been defined which are suitable for the operation of B-Doubles. This is due to the resolution of concerns related to several bridges, allowing more effective routes to be included in the revised notice.

As a result of investigation of the ACT road network, additional routes have been defined for the operation of B-Doubles. This revised network provides a more effective system for B-Double operators and has the added benefit of moving heavy vehicle traffic away from residential areas. Additionally, several additional routes in predominantly rural areas have been recommended for inclusion in the exemption notice, based upon access requests from primary producers.

In addition to the inclusion of routes for the operation of B-Doubles in the ACT, the inclusion of several other vehicles (4.6 metre high vehicles and 14.5 metre buses) within the revised notice is appropriate as these can operate on these routes. To operate in the ACT, these vehicles are currently obtaining permits to operate on these routes. To provide these vehicles with a designated route system should ease the administrative process for drivers, operators and ACT Road User Services.

An exemption notice is subject to any conditions specified in the notice, including conditions specified in Section 30 of the Act such as:

- Operating speed;
- The mass carried by a wheel, axle loads and maximum gross vehicle operating masses;
- Vehicle dimensions;
- The routes on which and times at which vehicles or combinations may operate;
- The securing of equipment and loads;
- Requirements for strengthening bridges and other structures and indemnities for damage; and
- Any other matter relating to the safety of persons or property.

A B-Double is defined in Section 3 of the Act as a motor vehicle combination consisting of a prime mover towing two semi-trailers.

This notice exempts B-Doubles and other vehicles which comply with this notice from the requirements of section 9 (relating to vehicle dimensions) and Section 24 (relating to the gross mass of vehicles and combinations).

Most notably, this exemption notice as with the notice it replaces, permits complying B-Doubles to have a maximum length of 25 metres and a maximum loaded gross combination mass of 62.5 tonnes, compared to the normal limits of 19 metres 42.5 tonnes for other combinations. These and the other conditions that apply to the operation of B-Doubles in the ACT are contained in the Schedule to the Instrument:

Part 1 of the Schedule specifies travel requirements;

Part 2 specifies operating conditions and requirements;

Part 3 specifies mass and dimension limits;

Part 4 specifies requirements for warning signs;

Part 5 specifies the standards and specifications with which a B-Double must comply, including requirements for speed limiting devices, tracking and turning capabilities, spray suppression, braking and coupling;

Part 6 provides for approved routes and travel requirements. These approved routes and the travel restrictions and conditions applying to them are listed in the Attachment to the Schedule. (B-Doubles will continue to require individual permits in order to operate on any route not listed in the Attachment.)

The exemption notice also exempts a person who drives a B-Double, or other vehicle to which the notice or current permit applies, from committing an offence under Section 37, provided that he or she holds a current licence to drive these vehicles.

It is a condition of the exemption notice that a copy be carried in any vehicle to which this notice applies operating in the ACT in accordance with its terms.

The new notice will commence on the date of gazetal.

The conditions defined in the exemption notice are consistent with those which apply in New South Wales.