



## CI-127B

### Vehicle Safety and Standards Branch Circular to Industry

#### Higher Mass Limits for Heavy Vehicles with Single Steer Axles

Refer to Government Gazette No 1 (The Exemption Notice RTVSR-2012-00834)  
published on 4 January 2013.

#### Background

The statutory provisions covering maximum axle mass limits for heavy vehicles are contained in Part 8 of the *Mass, dimension and loading requirements of the Road Traffic (Vehicles) Regulations 2014*. These provisions apply to all vehicles other than those covered by a specific exemption.

Some heavy vehicle operators in Western Australia have been experiencing difficulty complying with the statutory 6.0 tonne limit for single steer axles and consequently industry members have sought a higher mass limit. Discussions to resolve this issue have taken place between senior industry groups and Government agencies. The Department of Transport (DoT) has arranged publication of *The Exemption Notice* to implement the agreed position on this matter.

*The Exemption Notice* now allows suitably equipped trucks and prime movers to exceed the statutory 6.0 tonne steer axle mass limit, provided the load on the steer axle does not exceed:

- 6.5 tonnes when 295mm wide tyres are fitted, or
- 6.7 tonnes when 375mm wide tyres are fitted.

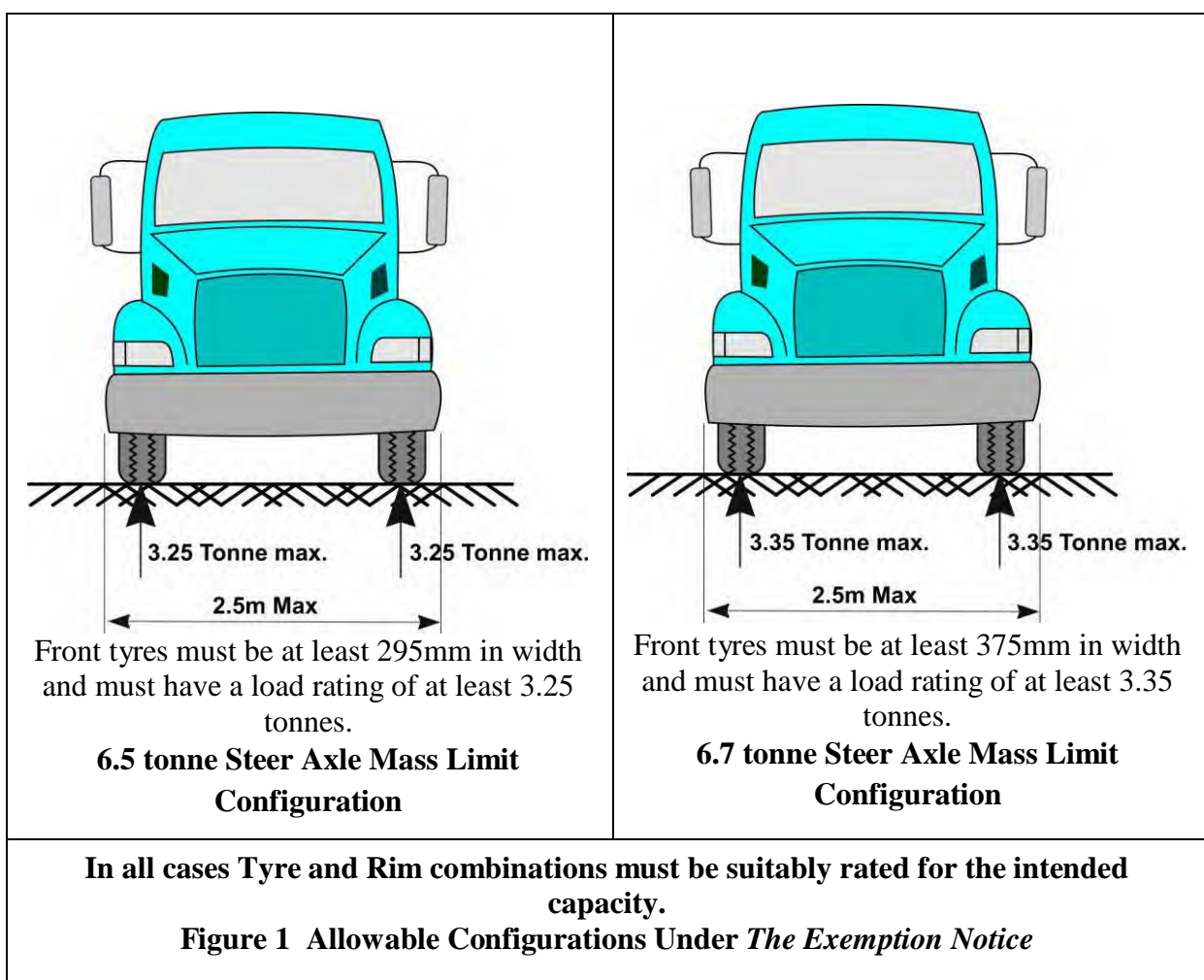
This exemption will allow heavy vehicle operators greater flexibility in operating their vehicles, without the risk of being fined for overloading. However, it only applies if the conditions specified below are met.

#### Conditions

The vehicle, when loaded up to the higher steer axle mass limits allowed by *The Exemption Notice*, must continue to comply with all other regulatory requirements. The following conditions apply:

- The steer axle must have a sufficient load rating to carry the additional load. This means that the front suspension and any other load bearing components must also be suitably load rated.
- The width of tyre fitted to the vehicle's steer axle must be appropriate for fitment to the vehicle and acceptable evidence of this must exist for presentation to enforcement officers. (Refer to the section titled "Evidence" in this document.)

- The tyres and rims must be rated to carry the additional load and tyres must be inflated to the tyre manufacturer's recommended pressure for the load in question.
- Neither the vehicle's GVM nor its GCM may be exceeded.
- The dimensions of the vehicle must remain within statutory limits - i.e. standard vehicles must not be wider than 2.5 metres and vehicles operating on a permit or exemption must not exceed the dimensions permitted by the permit or exemption.
- When the larger tyres are fitted there must be sufficient clearance under the mudguards to ensure the tyres are not in contact with the mudguards or any other components when the steering wheel is turned from lock to lock.



## Modifications

*The Exemption Notice* applies to unmodified vehicles. However vehicles that are either modified in accordance with the *National Code of Practice for Heavy Vehicle Modifications* – Vehicle Standards Bulletin 6 (VSB 6) or have a specific engineering approval which provides the vehicle with a higher load rating may be loaded to the revised rating. In both instances, the modifications must be approved by the DoT Vehicle Safety and Standards Section.

## Operating Outside *The Exemption Notice*

If a vehicle is fitted with wider tyres and that vehicle:

- does not have the necessary capacity to carry the additional load; or
- does not have the necessary evidence (documentation or plating) to support having wider steer axle tyres fitted; or
- does not conform with vehicle standards requirements in any other way;

then the vehicle would not be eligible for any exemption from the statutory 6.0 tonne steer axle limit and compliance with mass limits would be evaluated accordingly. Vehicles fitted with wide tyres may also be subject to a defect notice if there is no documentation or plating to support wide tyre fitment.

*The Exemption Notice* only applies to the single steer axle of a motor vehicle. Loading beyond statutory axle mass limits for any other axle will be subject to a loading infringement.

## Evidence

On-road enforcement officers may request proof that the vehicle is capable of carrying the additional loads permitted by *The Exemption Notice* and, in the case of vehicles fitted with wide front tyres, that the tyre size is appropriate for the vehicle. The vehicle operator should retain evidence for each vehicle so that it can be submitted to the relevant authority within a reasonable time if requested. It is recommended that this information be carried in the vehicle to minimise inconvenience to the driver.

The width of tyre fitted to the vehicle's steer axle must be either:

- listed as an option on the vehicle manufacturer's tyre placard; or
- listed as a permitted tyre size in the vehicle manufacturer's specifications or a document from the vehicle manufacturer; or
- certified and plated in accordance with Vehicle Standards Bulletin 6 (VSB 6) to certify that it complies with Modification Code E3 of VSB6.

### **Please note:**

**Any document from the vehicle manufacturer must incorporate the official letterhead of the company concerned.**

**If a vehicle has been subject to any modification with the potential to affect its steer axle load capacity and / or permissible steer axle tyre size, then the relevant specification(s) will need to be reassessed and the vehicle will need to have acceptable documentation or plating as evidence of the reassessed rating(s).**

**If the vehicle has the width of its front tyres specified in a manufacturer's tyre placard or under Code E3 on a VSB 6 plate, then it is not necessary to carry any further evidence of compliance with front tyre width requirements in the vehicle.**

## Compliance with VSB 6

In relation to obtaining VSB 6 certification, operators are advised that DoT administers a scheme known as the *Authorised Modification Scheme for Heavy Vehicles*, which is based on VSB 6. The scheme reduces paperwork and simplifies the modification approval process so that heavy vehicles can be modified and certified more efficiently.

This scheme allows common modifications to heavy vehicles to be certified by qualified people in the industry without the need for a modification permit to be issued by DoT.

Further information about the scheme and authorised modifiers is available on DoT's website under *Driver and Vehicle Services* and then *Safety and Standards*.

It is very important to note that vehicles modified under the *Authorised Modification Scheme for Heavy Vehicles* can only be legally plated by an Authorised Modifier. Authorised modifiers are located in the Perth metropolitan area and major country centres.

## Travel in Other States and Territories

Operators need to be aware that this exemption applies only to vehicles operating within this State. Operators must contact the relevant state or territory in which they intend to operate to determine that jurisdiction's operating conditions for steer axle loadings based on tyre width.

### **Vehicle Safety and Standards Section**

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