
The following slideshow was presented by NHVR's Paul Daly at the SARTA Mount Gambier Regional Meeting on Monday 18 May 2026, providing an update on the implementation of the HVNL reforms.

HVNL Reform Implementation Update

Paul Daly, NHVR Director Strategic Policy

HVNL reform:

- A review of the HVNL, led by the National Transport Commission (NTC), commenced in 2019.
- The review aimed to amend the existing law to improve safety and productivity for Australia's heavy vehicle sector.

Key objectives:

- Improving freight productivity
- Support safer technologies
- Align with modern freight operations

The reforms include amendments to the:

- Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL)
- Heavy Vehicle (Mass, Dimension and Loading) National Regulation (MDL)

**The amended
HVNL will
commence on
1st August
2026**

Key changes to HVNL

- Accreditation (General Safety)
- Alternative Compliance Accreditation
- National Audit Standard
- Codes of Practice
- CML to GML
- Length
- Height
- Tag Trailers
- Penalties
- Unfit to Drive
- Revise and develop website content
- Back of house systems
- Training development



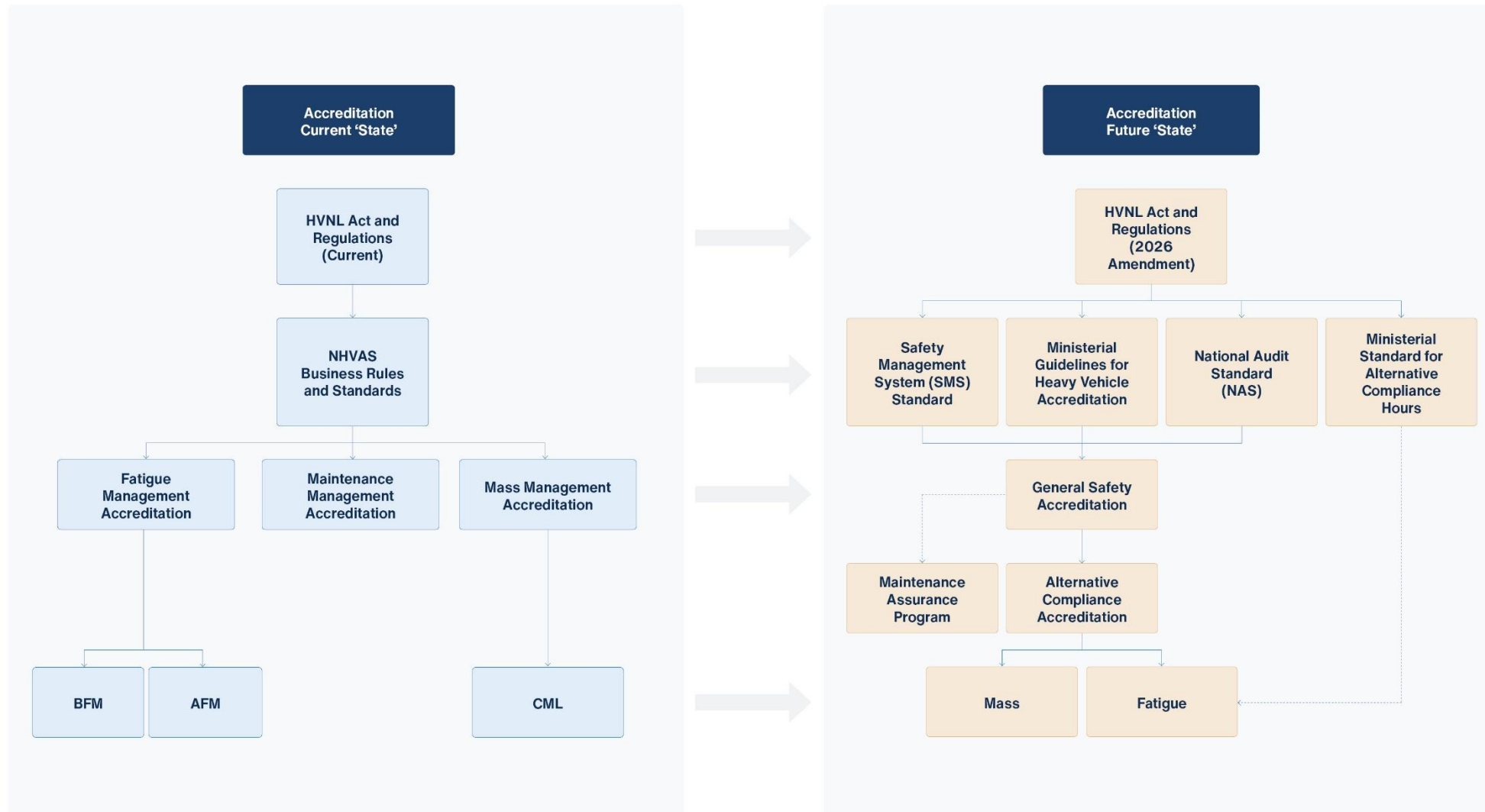
- **National Audit Standard (NAS):** finalised and with Ministers for approval alongside other statutory instruments
- **HVA transition planning:** Transitional arrangements developed to manage operator movement into the new Heavy Vehicle Accreditation (HVA) scheme from mid-2026. Targeted communications and broader awareness activities commenced to support understanding of changes and transition options underway.
- **Mass & Dimension Load (MDL) impacts:** ~120 notices identified, updates underway with engagement commenced with road managers and webinars delivered.
- **Unfit to Drive:** guidance material in final approval stage
- **EWD improvements:** Working with Electronic Work Diary providers to align systems with HVNL reforms
- **WWD updates:** Revised WWD being printed; supporting guidance document being finalised



- **Systems changes:** Finalising system updates (e.g. NHVRGo) to support implementation
- **Communications rollout underway:** Website updates, media activity and stakeholder messaging in place to support industry readiness and compliance confidence
- **Stakeholder engagement increased:** Broader engagement activity underway across industry (e.g. industry information sessions).
- **Education & training development:** Training materials being developed for all stakeholder groups to support transition to new requirements



Transition from NHVAS to HVA



Alternative Compliance Accreditation (ACA) for Fatigue



- Fatigue accreditation is transitioning to a single stream (i.e., Alternative Compliance Accreditation for Fatigue) under the amended HVNL, with BFM and AFM hours no longer offered to new applicants.
- Existing BFM/AFM operators may continue until accreditation expiry.
- Operator's will need to obtain General Safety Accreditation (GSA) before they can receive Alternative Compliance Accreditation; however, they can apply for both simultaneously.
- Templated Tables of Hours have been developed to streamline the application process for operators and provide flexibility:
 - **Based on existing BFM and common AFM hours**
 - **Risk-assessed using the RCS Matrix**
 - **Bespoke tables of hours remain available, similar to the current AFM process**



Safety Management System (SMS)

SMS becomes a core accreditation requirement

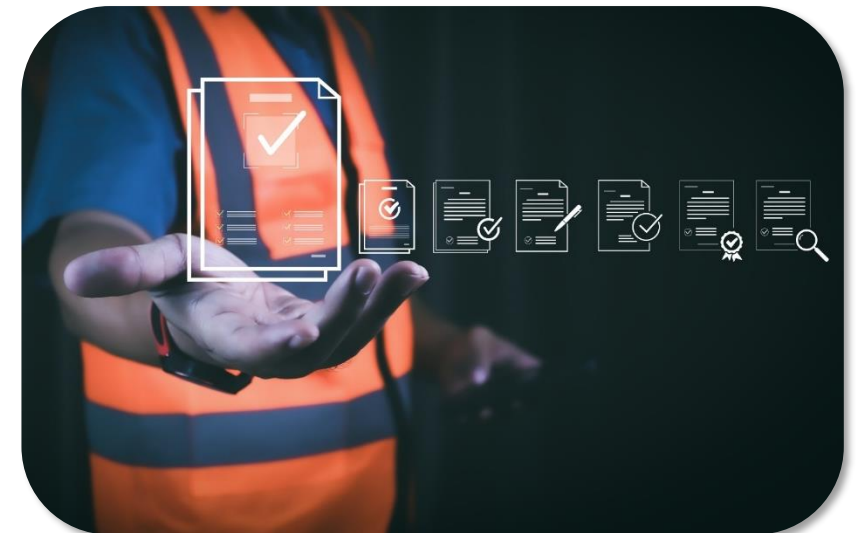
- A new standard for SMS is being introduced under the amended law
- The standard shifts the focus from providing **prescriptive** requirements to being **performance** based.
- Operators will need to ensure they're not just achieving **compliance**, but they are focussed on **managing safety**.

The new SMS standard is:

- Scalable to operator size, nature, complexity and risk profile.
- Evaluated by auditors in accordance with the National Audit Standard.
- New audit matrices against SMS Standard.
- SMS elements evaluated using the PSOE approach.
- Considers organisational culture in evaluating effectiveness.

Support

- Guidance material is currently being developed to support operators.



- **Transition starts mid-2026:** NHVAS replaced by HVA under 2025 HVNL amendments.
- **Phased approach:** Operators able to continue in NHVAS until expiry, with both NHVAS and HVA to run concurrently for up to three years.
- **Transition period:** Allows operators time to plan and move across.
- **Expiry before mid-2026:** Reminder to submit maintain application + complete audit by communicated date → 2-year accreditation.
- **Expiry mid-2026 to Dec 2026:** Invited to submit early maintain application → 2-year accreditation.
- **Later expiry dates:** SMS tools, guidance, and case-by-case extensions to support transition.
- **Support & communications:** Updates via NHVR GO, newsletters, website, and social media.

**You can read more
about the transition
on the NHVR website!**



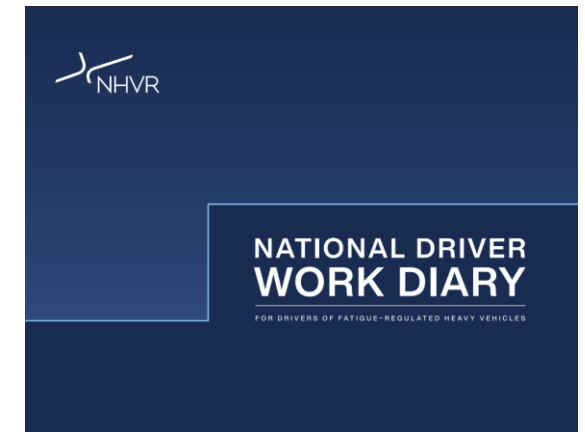
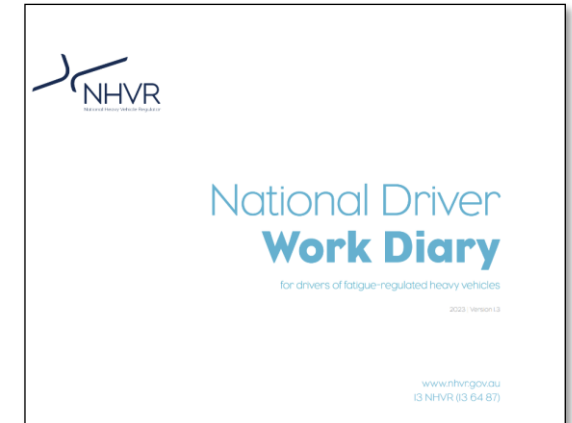
- Under the amended HVNL, a person must not drive a heavy vehicle on a road while impaired by fatigue or unfit to drive (section 228(1)).
- What's changed?
 - Expanded the current duty to include unfit to drive (not just fatigue).
 - Amended duty applies to all heavy vehicles over 4.5t.
 - Supports existing safety duties under the HVNL by placing a proactive and preventive responsibility on drivers to monitor and manage their health and fitness in relation to the safe operation of a heavy vehicle.
 - Empowers drivers to refrain from commencing driving or to cease driving if they are unfit for any reason.
- The HVNL defines unfit to drive as: ***'A driver of a heavy vehicle is unfit to drive the heavy vehicle on a road if the driver is not of sufficiently good health or fitness to drive the heavy vehicle'***
- A practical definition of unfit to drive can be given as: ***'A state that can occur at any point in time, where a driver of a heavy vehicle is impaired or incapacitated by any physical or mental health condition, illness, injury, or the effects of substances or medication that adversely impacts their ability to safely operate a heavy vehicle'***.



- The unfit to drive component expands on the existing duty not to drive while impaired by fatigue, recognising that a person's health or fitness - not just fatigue - may impact their ability to drive safely.
- An Unfit to Drive guide for driver's is being finalised which includes:
 - Explanation of the duty
 - Signs of being unfit to drive
 - Examples of being unfit to drive
 - Driver obligations and guidance on managing fitness to drive
- Updated work procedures, guides, and forms are being finalised for operations.

- The WWD has been updated to reflect amendments to the HVNL, including:
 - Inclusion of the option for drivers to indicate they are working under Alternative Compliance Hours (ACH)
 - Marking *Standard Hours* or *Standard Bus Hours* is now optional
 - Marking the Day of the Week is now optional
 - Recording of Work and Rest Hours Totals is now optional
 - General updates to ensures the WWD aligns with amended HVNL terminology
- The updated WWD will be available for the commencement of the amended law and will be progressively introduced as existing WWD stock depletes.
- Drivers can continue using their current WWD until it is filled up.
- An information sheet highlighting the key changes between the current and updated WWD is being finalised to help drivers understand the changes.

Current WWD



Updated WWD

Communications approach



- The NHVR has now shifted from our **educate and engage** phase, to **activate**.
- During the engage and educate phase, we built understanding of the reforms and the NHVR's plans for implementation, through trade media editorials, advertisements, social media posts, articles in the On the Road newsletter, targeted communications etc.
- From this month, practical guidance, tools and templates to support readiness for commencement will be rolled out across the NHVR's channels.
- This allows for a shift from knowledge to action.
- The NHVR's direct engagement with industry continues to ramp up through subject matter experts speaking at online info sessions, conferences and events, in addition to providing information through roadside information hubs and toolbox talks.
- Education and learning materials are continuing to be rolled out across the NHVR's channels (e.g. On the Road, website, social platforms).



Unfit to Drive/Fatigue

- Guidelines and checklists to help operators and drivers understand expanded unfit-to-drive duties.
- FAQs and training support for auditors to assess fatigue compliance.

Written & Electronic Work Diaries

- Transition materials and templates to guide operators on using WWDs and EWDs correctly.
- FAQs and practical examples to clarify common recording and compliance scenarios.

NHVAS → HVA Transition

- Operator guidelines and step-by-step checklists for moving from NHVAS to HVA.
- Templates and tools for Safety Management System (SMS) entry, audits, and Alternative Compliance Accreditation (ACA).

Mass, Dimension & Loading (MDL)

- Updated guidance on accessing General Mass Limits (GML) and other concessions.
- Templates and procedures for obtaining permits and liaising with road agencies.

Systems

- NHVR GO updates to reflect HVNL changes, helping operators and auditors manage accreditation, reporting, and compliance more efficiently.

Thank you & questions

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