



Transport
for NSW

Review of the NSW Livestock Loading Scheme



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Background

NSW is home to a large proportion of Australia's sheep (37%), cattle (21%), pigs (24%) and goats (46%). The State accounts for almost a quarter of the country's overall agricultural production of \$46.69 billion. Of NSW's \$4.69 billion gross livestock production value, livestock products accounted for 33.78%, or \$1.57 billion, and livestock slaughter and other disposals 66.22%, or \$3.08 billion.

In the case of cattle and sheep, the animals that account for the vast majority of livestock transportation in NSW, an overall trend towards population growth can be observed over the last five years.

In 2011-12, about 17,000 businesses were involved in the production of sheep in NSW, 28,000 in the production of cattle, 650 in the production of pigs and 1,000 in the production of goats.

The significance of the local livestock sector means that productivity is paramount for the NSW industry to remain economically viable and competitive against its counterparts in other states.

In 2012 the NSW Government introduced the NSW Livestock Loading Scheme (LLS) to improve productivity and protect jobs in the State's meat and livestock industry.

The scheme was developed in consultation with meat and livestock industry stakeholders and the (then) Local Government and Shires Association. It provides increased mass limits (Higher Mass Limits – HML) for livestock loads, and includes measures to minimise road

pavement wear, protect vulnerable bridges and reduce the incidence of livestock vehicle rollovers.

The scheme's success hinges on an existing extensive HML state road network and on-going expansion of the local and regional HML road network managed by councils.

According to data from Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), there has been a steady increase in the kilometres approved for HML transport over recent years on the NSW state road network, as depicted in the table below.

RMS does not have complete HML data for local and regional roads managed by councils (this is because, since the commencement of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in February 2014, councils communicate directly with the Regulator on access matters). However, it can be expected that the local and regional HML network has also been progressively expanded over recent years, aided in part by the development of the LLS.

The LLS is administered by RMS.

	HML Short Combinations		HML B-doubles	
	Kilometres of state roads approved	% of state road network approved	Kilometres of state roads approved	% of state road network approved
June 2011	16,688	93.8	14,759	83.0
December 2014	17,038	95.8	15,123	85.0

Livestock Loading Scheme fundamentals

The key elements of the scheme are:

- a) Participating vehicles must comply with specific standards
- b) Scheme vehicles fitted with certified Road Friendly Suspension may operate at HML
- c) Triple combinations are required to be enrolled in the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme and the Intelligent Access Program (IAP)
- d) Scheme vehicles are to comply with route restrictions but overall are permitted access to respective approved General Mass Limits (GML) vehicle networks at HML with restricted bridges signposted
- e) Road managers are to identify bridges that cannot be used at HML and signpost accordingly
- f) From May 2013, all drivers of scheme vehicles are to have completed an approved livestock safety training program.



Review methodology

In 2014, Transport for NSW (TfNSW) commissioned CleanStar Australia to undertake a review to assess the effectiveness and general operation of the scheme since its commencement in December 2012. The review considered the following aspects of the scheme:

- a) General operation of the scheme and issues as viewed by primary stakeholders
- b) Take-up by industry and local councils
- c) Value of the scheme to the meat and livestock industry
- d) Safety and compliance/enforcement matters
- e) The availability of relevant LLS routes and the signposting of non-HML infrastructure
- f) Opportunities to enhance the scheme, including observations that might realise those enhancements.

The review involved an intense period of data gathering and stakeholder consultation by CleanStar Australia. Scheme data were gathered through documentation supplied by RMS and detailed online surveys issued to councils, industry peak bodies, livestock carriers, animal welfare and other interested groups. A series of one-on-one interviews and face-to-face meetings were held with key government and industry stakeholders to gain their input to the policy and operational aspects of the scheme.

Key stakeholders consulted included:

- TfNSW Centre for Road Safety
- Roads and Maritime Services
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia
- Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- NSW Farmers Association

- Local Government NSW
- Local councils
- National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
- Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland
- Department of Transport, Victoria
- Livestock and Bulk Carriers Association
- Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters' Association
- Meat and Livestock Association
- Australian Trucking Association
- Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association Limited.

The review team also undertook a number of site visits which provided further in-depth insight. The sites visited included:

- Teys Australia, Wagga Wagga
- BFB Pty Ltd, Temora
- Cooradigbee, Wee Jasper
- Cavanagh's Livestock Transport, Inverell
- Stockmaster Livestock Transport Pty Ltd, Tamworth
- Fletcher International Exports, Dubbo
- Gundagai Meat Processors
- Wagga Wagga Livestock Marketing Centre
- Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets
- Yass Saleyards
- Tamworth Regional Livestock Exchange.



Key findings

The review identified the following key issues and findings:

1. Comparison with livestock loading schemes in other states

The NSW scheme is more definitive in its requirements for mass limits than Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, as it is the only state to cap its scheme at HML. The NSW scheme is also specific in its requirements for driver training (as is Victoria) and places stricter limitations on the length and configuration of road trains and B-triples.

2. Value of the LLS to industry

The scheme could save producers \$10.2 million a year in livestock transport costs if all eligible vehicles operated at HML rather than GML. This equates to a reduction of almost 7,000 truck trips annually.

The potential elimination of almost 7,000 truck trips would reduce wear on roads and other infrastructure and improve amenity for all road users.

In order to achieve these theoretical cost savings, councils in NSW need to agree formally to participate in the LLS to take advantage of the increased mass limits applicable to regional and local roads under the terms of the scheme. This is conditional on the load bearing capacity of bridges in local government areas.

3. Scheme implementation and stakeholder issues

The scheme has evolved over a number of years and there was considerable peak body lobbying during its development.

RMS notified more than 100 local councils about the scheme prior to its implementation in 2012. However, many councils engaged by the review team were unclear about the requirements for scheme participation.

Councils are generally concerned about the impact of the scheme on their road assets and indicated that they needed more information on the potential cost savings and economic benefits the scheme could deliver for local government.

General responses from industry regarding the value of the LLS to industry were almost unanimously positive.

Many stakeholders (such as most saleyard and abattoir operators) do not see themselves as integral links in the movement of livestock Chain of Responsibility.

Most operators said animal welfare is a high priority in their planning and execution of livestock movement.

4. Take-up of the scheme

Individual operator/driver enrolment in the scheme was encouraging and improving. As at 1 July 2013, 30 operators and 225 vehicles were enrolled in the scheme. By 29 May 2014, enrolment numbers had grown to 128 operators and 848 vehicles.

Council participation is not at the desired level to achieve the scheme's objectives. According to RMS data, as at May 2014, there were 21 councils participating in the LLS for various approved combinations (see Figure 1), and four councils not participating in the scheme, despite

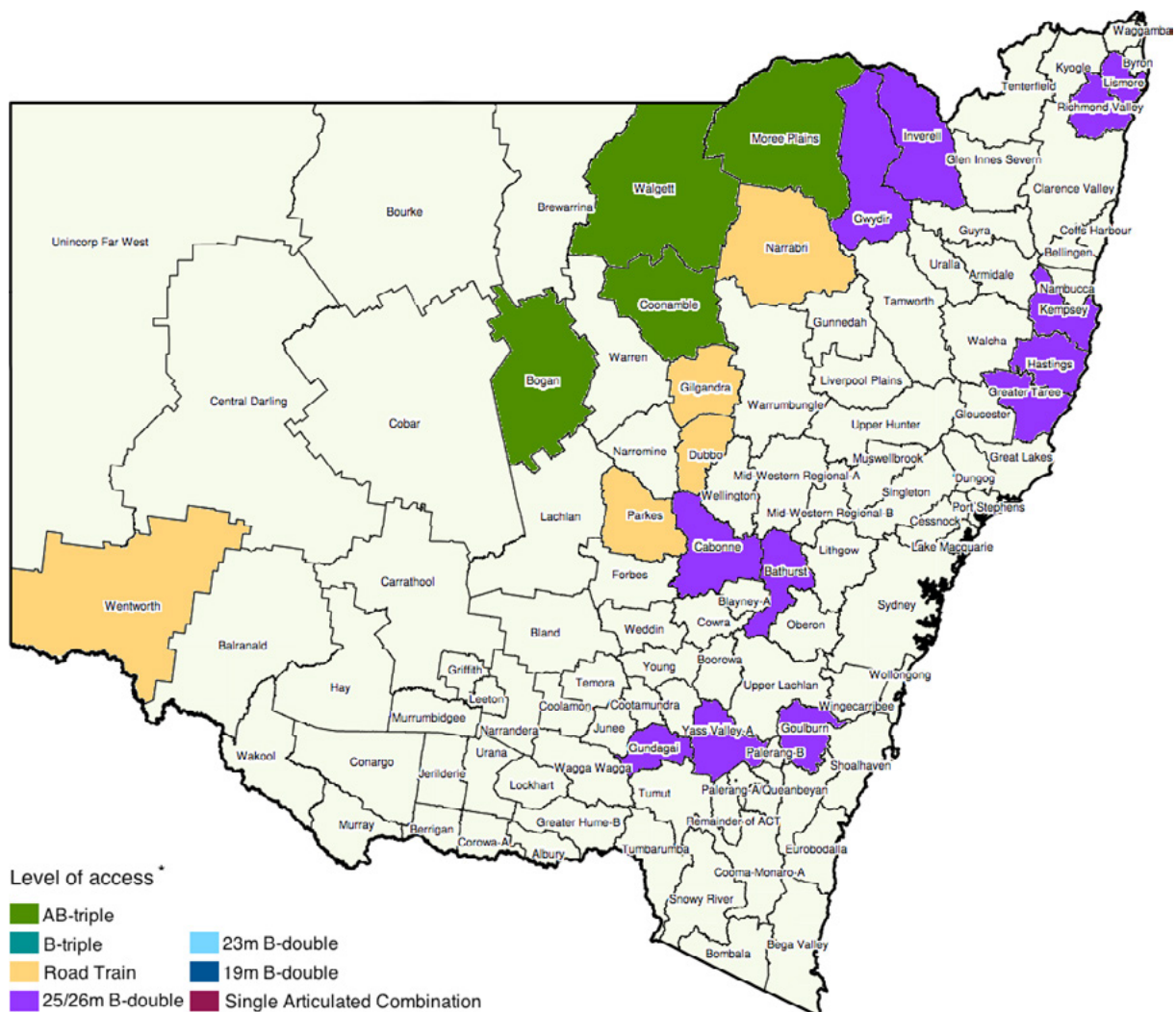
having initial engagement and identified bridge infrastructure that could support LLS weights. The review team identified 81 councils that had not opted in or out of the scheme.

A number of councils in the State's most significant areas for cattle and sheep production have not formally agreed to participate in the LLS.

Unless the road managers have agreed otherwise, livestock vehicles can only legally operate at GML on regional and local roads.

The scheme could be improved by increased focus on communication, council take-up, and funding for maintenance and asset management.

Figure 1: Apparent access implied by councils under the Livestock Loading Scheme



*The level of access is based on a graduated scale (e.g. a council providing access to road trains also provides access to all vehicle levels below that, but not those above).

Created by goFARM Australia based on information supplied by RMS, 2014

5. Safety

Safety data for the period from implementation of the LLS represents a relatively small sample from which to make quantitative conclusions. Nonetheless, there is an industry view that the LLS has made a generally positive contribution to livestock vehicle safety.

The driver training program has been most effective in raising the overall proficiency and competency of those drivers who participated.

Technology developments such as Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC) have the potential to contribute positively to reducing livestock vehicle rollovers. Trials might be considered.

The benefit of road friendly suspension on livestock vehicles operating in remote areas on unsealed roads requires further examination.

6. Compliance

While industry supports advances in truck technology designed to improve performance, ensure safety, and protect infrastructure, the Intelligent Access Program lacks industry acceptance. The main objections to the mandated use of IAP are based on a perception that it is to be used as an instrument of enforcement which tells a driver “what he cannot do”, rather than an industry-wide tool to assist driver with “what he can do”.

At the time of the review, the number of livestock vehicles inspected since the scheme’s inception, data on number and type of offences and subsequent fines were not available to the review team.

7. Road network management issues

Councils appear less concerned with pavement wear than with animal waste for livestock vehicles.

Understanding road networks suitable for livestock transport is essential for developing road maintenance programs and priorities.



Going forward

Overall, the independent review concluded that the NSW Livestock Loading Scheme is fundamentally sound in terms of delivering productivity for the State's livestock industry while ensuring safe and sustainable use of the NSW road network. Through interviews, surveys and discussions, the review concluded that there is broad acceptance of the LLS.

However, a key weakness of the scheme is that the current availability of the local road network for participating vehicles does not provide adequate connectivity for the livestock transport task at HML. This has been a key impediment to the successful operation of the scheme. Improvement in this area should lead to increased industry support of the LLS.

To address the issues raised in the review, the NSW Government will undertake the following actions:

- Transport for NSW (TfNSW), in collaboration with RMS, will develop and implement a communication plan to improve councils' awareness and take-up of the scheme. The plan will

include opportunities for TfNSW and RMS to work closely with councils to address and/or resolve any major issues that may impede their participation in the scheme.

- TfNSW and RMS discussions with councils will focus on building livestock road networks in local government areas, as opposed to seeking to have councils provide 'blanket' approval of all their roads for the purposes of the LLS. The focus on building livestock networks should lead to greater council participation in the scheme and increase the likelihood of critical roads being opened up for livestock vehicles operating at HML.
- In light of the review's finding that technology developments such as ABS and ESC have the potential to contribute positively to reducing livestock vehicle rollovers, TfNSW and RMS will hold discussions with the Centre for Road Safety to explore the feasibility of ESC trials for livestock vehicles.



Improving regional freight road infrastructure

The NSW Government is committed to helping councils to fix freight pinch points on their roads to improve freight transport efficiency and productivity for regional NSW.

Since March 2011 the NSW Government has invested \$1.55 billion to help councils across the state build and repair their local road infrastructure.

The NSW Government's \$42.85 million Fixing Country Roads (FCR) program is on top of this \$1.55 billion and provides an additional funding source for critical regional council road and bridge projects.

In February 2015, the NSW Government announced 77 projects on council roads would be largely funded under the Government's FCR program. Over 50 per cent of successful FCR projects specifically addressed livestock related benefits.

Moreover, of those successful FCR projects 17 are bridge assessment projects which will address the condition of over 400 bridges in a number of Local Government Areas across the State. Many of these bridges are important for the livestock industry.

The NSW Government has partnered with regional councils and the Australian Government through the Australian Government's Bridges Renewal Programme and Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Programme to grow the FCR program to a total package of works worth \$89 million over the next two years.

Following the re-election, the NSW Government plans to invest a further \$500 million into future funding rounds of FCR.

TfNSW will continue to explore available State and Commonwealth funding initiatives to support councils where needed to facilitate access for livestock transport.



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