



Frequently asked questions on the concessional importation schemes

When should I obtain a vehicle import approval?

You should not ship your vehicle until after you receive a vehicle import approval. You will need a vehicle import approval to take delivery of your vehicle from Customs Control at the Australian port of entry.

For example, you should not ship your vehicle in anticipation of receiving a vehicle import approval by the time your vehicle arrives in port. If you import your vehicle without a vehicle import approval, the following may happen:

1. ***your vehicle may be held at the Customs barrier*** of the Australian port of entry by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. Your vehicle may be held in Customs bond storage while the Department assesses your vehicle import application. You may incur additional Customs bond storage fees during this period.
2. ***you may be refused access to your vehicle*** (and other material stored with your vehicle) by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service while your vehicle is held in Customs bond storage. As a result, you may encounter difficulties in providing documentation in support of your vehicle import application. For example, you may find it difficult to obtain photos of your vehicle if you have not already done so prior to importation.
3. ***your vehicle may not meet scheme criteria*** and you may be refused a vehicle import approval. Some vehicles do not qualify for concessional importation. Importers with a vehicle already landed in Australia, and who are refused a vehicle import approval, are required to export or dispose of the vehicle at their own expense under the supervision of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

When do I receive my vehicle import approval?

You will normally be advised within 15 working days of lodgement of your vehicle import application – and all necessary supporting documentation – whether your application has been approved or refused. This is a target service standard; in peak periods it may not be met.

Incomplete applications or missing documents may delay the Department's consideration of your application and hence delay the decision.

How do I apply under a scheme?

To apply for a vehicle import approval, you should submit to the Department a completed application form and the \$50 application fee. You should clearly identify the scheme you are applying under. Depending on the scheme, you may also be required to submit additional supporting documentation. Applications may be forwarded to the Department by email, fax or mail.

What types of vehicles are covered by the schemes?

The concessional importation schemes apply to motor vehicles and trailers for motor vehicles.

What schemes are available?

There are some 15 concessional importation schemes. Each scheme has been established for the importation of a defined class of motor vehicle. In particular, the schemes have been established to cover those circumstances where certification is not a viable or practical option. Examples include older vehicles, race / rally vehicles, special purpose vehicles and the vehicles of migrants and expatriate Australians returning to Australia.

Separate information brochures are available to describe how each of the schemes operate. Information on the schemes (including scheme criteria) is available from the Department's website, at <www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/vehicle_regulation/bulletin/importing_vehicles/index.aspx>.

Do the schemes also cover vehicle registration?

No. The concessional importation of a vehicle is distinct from the requirements of vehicle registration. Vehicle registration is handled by the relevant state or territory registering authority.

There is no certainty that a vehicle once imported can be registered for road use. Vehicles may need to be modified to meet road registration requirements. For example, road vehicles in Australia are generally required to be right-hand drive. You should contact the registering authority for further information on road registration requirements.

What scheme is best?

Sometimes vehicles can qualify under more than one concessional importation scheme. Requirements for road registration can vary depending on the type of scheme you select for the import of your vehicle. These requirements are determined by the state or territory registering authority. Before you decide on an importation scheme, you should contact the relevant state or territory registering authority.

What is the purpose of the concessional importation schemes?

Australian, State and Territory Governments maintain a federal system for road vehicles. In particular, national standards for motor vehicles deliver levels of vehicle safety and environmental performance that are generally expected by the Australian community. These standards are recognised as contributing towards safer roads and cleaner air. Most vehicles supplied to the Australian market are certified (prior to supply) as meeting these standards.

However, conducting a compliance process for some “one-off” types of vehicles may be so difficult or costly as to be prohibitive. Without a concession, the import of these vehicles may not be practically or economically viable.

As a result, concessional importation schemes for motor vehicles have been established by the Australian Government. These schemes allow for the importation of motor vehicles outside of normal certification arrangements.

For example, older historic vehicles (such as vehicle “projects”) may be incapable of meeting safety and emission standards. These vehicles may have been stored unused for many years, the vehicle may be in poor or unroadworthy condition or in a state of disrepair. Any form of certification may preclude the importation of these types of vehicles.

Do I need a vehicle import approval for the temporary import of a vehicle?

Alternative arrangements – carnets – are available for the temporary importation of vehicles. Under these arrangements, it is not necessary for you to obtain a vehicle import approval.

A carnet allows for the admission of goods without the payment of duties or taxes. Carnets typically have a period of operation of up to 12 months. Carnets should be arranged before the importation of the vehicle.

For example, some types of carnets may be used by foreign tourists visiting Australia who wish to bring their vehicle with them. These carnets are issued by national motoring associations or touring clubs in your country of residence (these associations generally have a reciprocal arrangement with the Australian Automobile Association).

Other types of carnets may be used by professional organisations (such as motor racing organisations). These carnets are issued by national guaranteeing associations such as national chambers of commerce.

Carnets are administered by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. Customs has an information sheet on the use of carnets available from its website, at www.customs.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/FS_carnetHolders.pdf. For further details on carnets, please contact the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

What are my rights of review?

If you are unsatisfied with the Department’s decision on your vehicle import application, you may seek a review of the decision. In particular, you may:

1. ***seek a re-consideration of the decision by the Department.*** In effect, you may seek that the Department conducts an internal review of the decision. For example, applicants may provide additional or new evidence not assessed with the original application. Under this option, the Administrator of Vehicle Standards re-considers the matter and advises applicants whether the original decision has been re-affirmed or whether a new decision has been made. To seek a review, you will need to contact the Department.
2. ***seek a review of the decision by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.*** The Tribunal is independent of the Department. The Tribunal provides merits review across a wide range of administrative decisions made by Australian Government ministers, departments, agencies, authorities and other tribunals. Merits review involves considering afresh the facts, law and policy relating to the decision. The Tribunal

considers the material before it and decides what is the correct – or, in a discretionary area, the preferable – decision. It may affirm, vary or set aside the decision. Please note that fees may apply and that there are time limits on lodging applications. Further details are available from the Tribunal’s website, at <www.aat.gov.au>. To seek a review, you will need to contact the Tribunal.

3. ***contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman.*** The Ombudsman considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by an Australian Government department or agency. The Ombudsman cannot override the decision. The Ombudsman resolves disputes through consultation and negotiation and, if necessary, by making formal recommendations. Further details are available from the Ombudsman’s website, at <www.ombudsman.gov.au>. To make a complaint, you will need to contact the Ombudsman.