



ROAD VEHICLE STANDARDS

Guidance note

The effect of significant modifications on older vehicles

This Guidance note clarifies when the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the department) considers a road vehicle has a relevant build date at least 25 years before the date of application and satisfies the eligibility criteria for a concessional RAV entry approval under section 36 of the Road Vehicle Standards Rules 2019 (the Rules).

The approval pathway for older vehicles

The Road Vehicle Standards legislation provides a pathway for importing and/or providing road vehicles that meet the eligibility criteria to be defined as an **older vehicle** (see section 36 of the Rules). To meet this eligibility criteria, the department needs to be satisfied that:

1. The road vehicle is in one of the following **vehicle categories**:
 - Passenger car (MA)
 - Forward-control passenger vehicle (MB)
 - Off-road passenger vehicle (MC)
 - Moped - 2 wheels (LA)
 - Moped – 3 wheels (LB)
 - Motor cycle (LC)
 - Motor cycle and side-car (LD)
 - Motor tricycle (LE)
 - Light goods vehicle (NA).
2. For all of the categories listed above the vehicle must have a **relevant build date** that is at least 25 years before the date the approval application is submitted.

The **relevant build date** is the later of:

- the date that assembly of the vehicle was first completed, or
- the date that the last of any significant modifications were made to the vehicle.

Note – the vehicle categories are set out in the [Vehicle Standard \(Australian Design Rule – Definitions and Vehicle Categories\) 2005](#)).

The date that assembly of the vehicle was first complete

Most vehicles will have a plate or sticker affixed to the inside of the vehicle setting out the date it was considered to have been built or assembled. Other evidence may include original sales receipts, first registration papers, or final deregistration papers, which are used in some countries.

Significant modifications made to a road vehicle

Where the vehicle has been significantly modified since it was first assembled, the modifications must have been completed more than 25 years before the date of application for the vehicle to still be considered an older vehicle.

The application process requires the applicant to select the type of modification(s) undertaken (if any), the dates each modification was completed and supporting evidence – for example, photographs and/or invoices/receipts relating to the modification work.

In considering whether any modifications made to the vehicle are *significant*, whether the modifications have significantly changed the original specification and/or performance of the vehicle will be considered. This will be based both on the extent of the modifications and the effect of those modifications on the performance and design of the road vehicle.

Examples and details of modifications that are likely to be considered significant

Modification	Likely to be significant	Likely to be not significant
Left hand drive to right hand drive conversion	A left to right hand drive conversion is considered a major modification even though the function and performance of the vehicle will remain the same.	
Vehicle body	<p>A body modification such as a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• chopped roof• rear wheel tubs requiring chassis modification• full body kits• replacement of front or rear panels with a cowl• extension for limousine use• conversion from one vehicle type to another (e.g. sedan to coupe, coupe to convertible, wagon to utility)• replacement of original body with new/replacement body	Minor period type modifications such as flaring of guards to accommodate wider wheels

Modification	Likely to be significant	Likely to be not significant
Vehicle chassis	<p>Modification to the chassis such as the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relocation of suspension location points for geometry changes or to allow for larger section tyres • installation of aftermarket front or rear sub frame(s) or cradle(s) • chassis modified to accommodate routing of performance exhaust systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – transmission tunnel enlargement to accommodate non-standard transmissions 	<p>Addition of brackets for purposes such as a location for anti-roll bars and panhard rods</p>
Engine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addition or upgrade of turbochargers or superchargers (where the installation is not a factory option) • addition of nitrous oxide injection systems • engine changes to non-standard or non-optional engines • modified engines where the sum of modifications (internal components, induction and exhaust) would significantly increase the output of the standard installation engine • the engine type was not available 25 years ago. 	<p>Engine internal changes</p>
Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • replacement of a gearbox that was not available as an option. • replacement of a gearbox type not available 25 years ago. 	<p>Gearbox internal changes</p>
Front suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aftermarket suspension systems (e.g. fabricated location members or wishbones) • a non-standard suspension system for that model vehicle • major suspension components from a different vehicle type • changing or modifying wheel hubs to accommodate components 	<p>Changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springs • shock absorbers • Anti-roll bars (or installation where none were originally installed)
Steering system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conversion from a steering box type (e.g. recirculating ball, worm and peg) to rack and pinion 	<p>Changes to steering column e.g. addition of a collapsible steering column element, or addition of power assisted steering</p>
Rear suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aftermarket suspension systems (location members) • conversion from one functional type to another (e.g. leaf springs to four or five link live axle, suspension system that was not standard or optional on that model vehicle, major suspension components from a different vehicle type, changing or modifying wheel hubs to accommodate components) 	<p>Changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • springs • shock absorbers • anti-roll bars (or installation where none were originally installed)

Modification	Likely to be significant	Likely to be not significant
Rear axles / final drives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aftermarket final drive axles housings • non-standard or non-optional rear axles • installation of a rear axle/final drive from a different vehicle type 	Changes to final drive ratio or installation of new-manufacture rear axle assemblies (to original design)
Braking system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • braking system (front and/or rear brakes) not standard or optional on that model vehicle • drum to disc type braking • aftermarket braking system (front and/or rear) • dimensional increase of active braking components (disc or drum) • braking components from a different vehicle type • changing or modifying wheel hubs to accommodate components 	Installation of a brake booster/s (where none was fitted originally) or pressure limiting valves, grooved or drilled discs

Vehicle significantly modified less than 25 years ago

If the vehicle does not meet the eligibility criterion for an older vehicle, other options are available to you:

- Restore the vehicle to original specifications.
- If the vehicle will not be used (or only used in exceptional circumstances) on a public road in Australia, consider the significantly modified pathway under subparagraph 151(b)(v) of the Rules – check with your state or territory registration authority to confirm whether restricted registration would be allowed.
- Wait until the modifications become 25 years old.
- Consider if the vehicle is eligible for entry on the Specialist and Enthusiast Vehicles Register and use the pathway under section 37 of the Rules where the vehicle would be modified by a registered automotive workshop in accordance with an approved Model Report.

Further information

For further information, please visit the [department's website](#) or submit an online [enquiry form](#).

Quick tips

- [Importing a road vehicle into Australia](#)
- [Concessional RAV entry approval](#)
- [How to import your 25 years or older vehicle.](#)