

May 2025 Statement – Update on National Automated Access System

Background

Infrastructure and Transport Ministers have agreed to progress a national automated access system for all heavy vehicles, known as the NAAS. In accordance with Heavy Vehicle National Law reform proposition 2.3, the NAAS is intended to provide a solution to replace 90 per cent of current access road access permit requests, while recognising access permits will still be needed for some heavy vehicle journeys.

A key benefit for heavy vehicle operators that will be realised with the introduction of an automated access system is the ability for consent decisions to be made more quickly, consistently and transparently. It will also reduce the workload required for road managers to manually process consent applications by significantly reducing the need for permits. The aim of the NAAS is to provide industry with a seamless customer experience, and greater quality, consistency, certainty and timeliness in access decision-making.

The NAAS will be based on the high-level architecture of the Heavy Vehicle Access Management System (HVAMS) already operating successfully in Tasmania. When the NAAS is operational, it is expected the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator Portal (now NHVR Go) will continue to be the central point for all applicants seeking access.

Benefits of a NAAS

The experience in Tasmania is that this system has encouraged road managers to maximise road access where safe to do so, providing a significant productivity boost for industry. It has also encouraged innovation by heavy vehicle operators, to adjust vehicles and loads to suit the constraints of road assets, thus optimising use of the existing road network.

As well as saving time (for heavy vehicle operators and for governments), data from the system is informing government investment into priority assets (e.g. bridge renewal, local roads). Since HVAMS was made available for mobile cranes in Tasmania, there has been a 95% reduction in permit applications.

Progress towards a NAAS

Each of the six HVNL jurisdictions has agreed to progress the NAAS and each is making significant investments. A national project team was established in late 2023, and implementation teams are active in each jurisdiction. A Technical Advisory Group was established in 2024, reporting to the HVNL Steering Committee, to coordinate the technical work and ensure requirements in each jurisdiction are addressed.

Significant amounts of preparatory work are being conducted, especially gathering the asset attribute data for key metrics used for heavy vehicle access assessments—including dimensions and capacity of bridges, tunnels, intersections and road geometry, along key routes targeted for early NAAS releases. The NAAS requires this detailed information on the capacity of different road assets to safely handle restricted access vehicles. That is because the NAAS will match any application vehicle/load to the capacity of any road asset (and the risk appetite of the road manager). Decision-making is effectively pre-loaded, allowing immediate generation of a map showing all roads that particular vehicle can safely travel on.

The NAAS is being designed to accommodate different assessment methods of different road managers in how they manage their assets and make access decisions. Bringing those many different methods together to create a single seamless user experience is a challenging task. A further challenge will be having different access systems running in parallel while the NAAS is gradually rolled out to handle most access requests.

Work is now progressing on the development of the base product, and the sequence of releases for different heavy vehicle types. Initial assessment modules have been developed for OSOM, SPV and PBS vehicles and are currently in the testing and finalisation stages.

An early version of the NAAS has already been successfully demonstrated, with Australian Defence Force heavy vehicles in Queensland. The Australian Defence Force module has been completed and the formal launch in Queensland is expected in the second quarter of 2025.

The next public release for the NAAS will be for PBS vehicles in Tasmania in the second quarter 2025, then OSOM vehicles in Queensland, planned for third quarter 2025. That will be followed by a release for SPVs in Queensland, and a next-generation NAAS release in Tasmania for PBS vehicles. These early releases in two very different states will provide an important testing ground for industry and road managers to refine how the NAAS will work. Other states will then be able to follow, building on the NAAS capabilities implemented in the lead states.