

Vehicle Standards Instruction (General 23.2)

Buying a caravan or camper trailer

This checklist can be used as a guide when shopping for a new or second hand caravan or camper trailer. The checklist covers general safety and compliance items. If in doubt, seek the advice of an industry expert.

Tow vehicle capacity

Before looking for a caravan or camper trailer, it is important to ensure your vehicle is capable of safely towing the caravan or camper trailer you are looking to purchase.



The items below should be checked to ensure the vehicle is capable of towing the caravan or camper trailer:

- Vehicle's towing capacity (manufacturer's handbook)
- Tow bar rating (should be stamped on tow bar or vehicle plate)

Towing options such as special suspension or transmission options or load-distributing devices that may be fitted to the vehicle by either the manufacturer, dealer or a firm specialising in towing equipment.

You will need to account for the additional load imposed on the towing vehicle by the caravan or camper trailer which will reduce the load capacity available for passengers and cargo in the towing vehicle.

Risks associated with towing a caravan or camper trailer using an undersized towing vehicle

- Chassis and transmission damage to the tow vehicle
- Over-heating
- Poor handling
- Increased braking distances
- Poor acceleration

Caravan and camper trailer mass specifications

The following terms are used to describe mass specifications on caravans and camper trailers.

Tare	the mass of any vehicle equipped for travelling on a road, not including any load.
ATM	Aggregate Trailer Mass is the maximum mass for the loaded trailer, specified by the manufacturer, and includes any mass imposed on the vehicle towing the trailer when they are on a horizontal surface.
GTM	Gross Trailer Mass means the mass transmitted to the ground by the axles of a trailer when the trailer is loaded to its ATM and connected to a towing vehicle. The GTM does not include the mass imposed on the towing vehicle.
Tow coupling rating	The tow coupling is the mechanism that connects to the towing vehicle, and should be marked with their load capacity and the manufacturer's name or trademark.

The difference between tare and ATM is all the carrying capacity that you have for loading your caravan or trailer. To ensure this carrying capacity is sufficient for your travelling needs, calculate the weight of all the items which you will carry in your caravan or trailer to make your holiday comfortable. These include such items as gas bottles, clothes, towels, bedding, tools, food and drinks, recreational equipment, and the weight of tank water. Be honest with yourself, it's better to overestimate than leave yourself short.


Checking compliance with the *Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989*

All caravans and trailers not exceeding 4.5 tonne ATM and manufactured after 1988 must comply with the Australian Design Rules or the [Vehicle Standards Bulletin 1 – Building Small Trailers](#).

Checking for stolen or re-birthed caravans or camper trailers

Due to the construction methods of caravans and camper trailers, they are more prone to being fraudulently re-identified. Check for obvious signs of tampering with the identifying numbers on the drawbar, such as mismatched paint, identifiers ground off or re-stamped. The manufacturer's name on the trailer plate should match other branding on the caravan or camper trailer.

Sample Trailer Plate

<p>● MANUFACTURER</p> <p>MODEL</p> <p>VIN</p> <p>DATE OF MANUFACTURE</p> <p>TARE kg</p> <p>AGGREGATE TRAILER MASS kg</p> <p>TYRE SIZE/PLY</p> <p>RECOMD. COLD TYRE PRESS kPa</p> <p>LOAD CARRYING CAPACITY OF</p> <p>● AXLE OR AXLE GROUP kg</p>	<p>1 THE SUM OF THE LOAD CARRYING CAPACITIES OF THE TYRES FITTED TO ANY AXLE OR AXLE GROUP OF THE VEHICLE SHALL NOT BE LESS THAN THE RELEVANT LOAD SHOWN.</p> <p>2 THE TYRES FITTED TO THIS VEHICLE SHALL HAVE A SPEED CATEGORY AT LEAST EQUAL TO THE RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM VEHICLE OPERATING SPEED, km/h</p> <p>3 THIS TRAILER WAS MANUFACTURED TO COMPLY WITH THE MOTOR VEHICLE STANDARDS ACT 1989.</p>	
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Industry advice

Specific industry advice may be sought from industry groups such as:

- [Caravanning Queensland](#)
- [RACQ](#)
- [MTAQ](#)

Further Information

For further information, please contact the Department of Transport and Main Roads on 132380 or visit <https://www.qld.gov.au/vanaware>.

Caravan or camper trailer compliance checklist

	<p>Identity checks – Check the Personal Property Securities Register to find out if there is an outstanding debt, or it has been listed as stolen or written off. Check that the trailer plate and Vehicle Identification Number on the drawbar are intact and have not been tampered with.</p>
	<p>Electrical wiring (240V) – fitted and certified by licensed electrician Note: Imported caravans may require extensive rewiring to meet Australian Standards</p>
	<p>Gas installations – fitted and certified by licensed gas fitter Note: Many imported caravans/camper trailers require extensive modifications including the modification of the frame to meet the ventilation requirements required for Australian compliance.</p>
	<p>Safety chain – rating adequate for Aggregate Trailer Mass (ATM) of caravan or trailer (refer to section 16 of VSB1) Note: “D” Shackles must be fit for purpose and meet or exceed the rating of the safety chain.</p>
	<p>Rear overhang – rear overhang of a light vehicle must not be more than the lesser of 3.7m and— (a) for a 5th wheeler caravan or dog trailer—60% of the distance between the front articulation point and the rear overhang line; or (b) for any other trailer (caravan/box trailer)—the distance between the front of the body or load carrying area and the rear overhang line. Note: The addition of rear carry racks, jerry can holders or storage boxes may render the vehicle over length and non-compliant.</p>
	<p>Width – maximum allowable is 2.5 metres Note: This measurement includes permanent fittings, such as awnings, ladders, access steps and hand rails.</p>
	<p>Length – maximum allowable is 12.5 metres</p>
	<p>Height – maximum allowable is 4.3 metres</p>
	<p>Braking system – all trailers with a 750kg Gross Trailer Mass (GTM) or more Note: Must be fitted with an effective braking system as required (specified in section 15 of VSB1)</p>
	<p>Coupling – appropriately rated and marked to suit caravan or trailer Note: Coupling body must be marked (specified in Section 16 of VSB1)</p>

	<p>Identification –</p> <p>The manufacturer or importer of a caravan or camper trailer must affix a trailer plate which provides the manufacturer's specifications and certifying that the trailer complies with the <i>Motor Vehicles Standards Act 1989</i>.</p> <p>The Trailer Plate must show at least the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturer's or Importer's Name (whichever party takes responsibility for the certification statement); Note: Must be the name of a person, company or business. Homemade must not be marked on the plate • Trailer Model • Vehicle Identification Number (specified in Section 8 of VSB 1) • Date of Manufacture (month/year, e.g. 02/14) • Aggregate Trailer Mass (kg) • the Certification Statement (specified below). <p>The certification statement for a new trailer is:</p> <p>This trailer was manufactured to comply with the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989.</p> <p>The certification statement for used imported trailers is:</p> <p>This trailer is an imported used trailer. It has been modified and assessed as complying with the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989.</p> <p>This plate may also include additional information such as the tyre placard information (specified in Section 20 of VSB1). All information must be legible and embossed, indented, etched or engraved in letters and numbers not less than 2.5 mm high.</p> <p>All caravans or camper trailers, manufactured after 1988, must be identified by a 17 character Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), while for caravans or camper trailers manufactured prior to 1988 a chassis number must be provided.</p>
	<p>Ground clearance</p> <p>Minimum ground clearance requirements (100mm). Increased ground clearance will provide better off-road capability but may adversely affect stability.</p>
	<p>Entrance door</p> <p>An outward opening or sliding door is provided on left hand side or rear of a caravan. (specified in section 22 of VSB1)</p>
	<p>Lighting</p> <p>All mandatory lighting requirements are specified in section 13 of VSB 1</p>