

VIB30: Imported wheelchair accessible vehicles – compliance issues

Vehicle Inspectors Bulletin

Introduction

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the use of imported wheelchair access vehicles where access equipment, as installed by the original vehicle manufacturer, comply with local standards but do not comply with recognised Australian modification standards.

Used wheelchair access vehicles (i.e. people mover, station wagon, small omnibus) imported from Japan are becoming readily available in Australia. The wheelchair access restraints and lift equipment are not tested or rated to comply with Australian standards.

Commonwealth import approval for these vehicles may be via the Register of Approved Workshop Scheme (RAWS). The vehicles may be fitted with a RAWS imported vehicle compliance plate or may have a presence on the Register of Approved Vehicles. The vehicles may also be imported as a personal import or personal effects vehicle. Commonwealth approval requires compliance with Australian Design Rules (ADR) applicable to the vehicle. Wheelchair access equipment is not within the scope of ADRs and are assessed under state and territory vehicle modification standards.

In Australia, the standard for modification approval of wheelchair access equipment in motor vehicles is outlined in Australian and New Zealand Standards via modification Codes of Practice (i.e. Vehicle Standards Bulletin (VSB) 6 – section K5, R2). The Japanese standard for wheelchair access equipment does not align with standards in Australia.

Summary of compliance issues

	Imported vehicle*	Private vehicle**	Public transport vehicle
Lift platform dimension	Up to 1225mm length Up to 850mm width	Specific to individual requirements: size, mass, equipment, comfort, vehicle type, available space	1300mm length (min) 800mm width(min)
Lift capacity rating	Up to 250kg		300kg (min)
Occupant clear space	Up to 1225mm length Up to 850mm width Up to 1465mm		1300mm length (min) 800mm width(min) 1500mm height (min)***
Restraints	Unknown		ADR compliance
Labelling/instructions	Non-English		English
Notes			
*Specifications may vary			
**Should be suitable to vehicle and the needs of the wheelchair occupant			
***1400mm unobstructed vertical height permitted prior to January 2013			

Standards

- [Vehicle Standards Bulletin 6 \(VSB6\) | National Code of Practice Heavy Vehicle Modification](#)
- AS/NZS 10542.1:2015 Technical systems and aids for people with disability - Wheelchair tiedown and occupant-restraint systems, Part 1: Requirements and test methods for all systems
- AS 3856.1:2021 Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities - Vehicle mounted, Part 1: Product requirements
- AS 3856.2:2021 Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities - Vehicle fitted, Part 2: Fitting requirements
- [Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002](#)

Applicability

As these wheelchair access vehicles are supplied as “original” by the vehicle manufacturer, private and dedicated use of these vehicles for specific individuals is permitted providing the wheelchair access equipment is used within the capacity of the equipment and in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Where specifications or instructions are not known, it is the responsibility the vehicle owner/driver to know the limitations of the equipment (i.e. language translation) in providing safe transport of passengers. To remove any doubt, the equipment should be upgraded to comply with modification standards.

For public transport service vehicles (i.e. wheelchair accessible taxis, other on-demand services) where wheelchair occupants’ circumstances vary, compliance with recognised modification standards is required. Compliance may include upgrades to restraint systems, lift assemblies, signage and wheelchair occupant clear space zones. Modification approvals may be required by state and territory registration authorities.

For legal certainty, vehicle owners/drivers should seek advice from their vehicle insurance company to determine the liability that might arise from the use of the imported wheelchair access vehicles.

Vehicle inspection (wheelchair access equipment)

1. Authorised vehicle inspectors should validate compliance with the applicable import approval pathway (compliance plate approval, RAV entry, personal import, other) and note seating capacity.
2. Where wheelchair access equipment is installed as original equipment, advise the vehicle owner/driver of the requirements based on the use of the vehicle (private use or public transport service use).
 - a. Private use – note condition of wheelchair access equipment
 - i. Private registration permitted subject to validating vehicle identity and roadworthiness
 - ii. Advise on limitations of wheelchair access equipment
 - b. Public transport service use – modification upgrade required
 - i. Advise on commercial passenger vehicle requirements

More information

For more information, contact the Vehicle Standards unit on 08 8924 7157 or email vehiclestandards.mvr@nt.gov.au