

TOWING SAFETY GUIDELINES



JOIN THE TOWING REVOLUTION

AT ELECBRAKES, WE LOVE TO TOW.

This love of towing inspired us to develop a revolutionary electric brake controller to make towing more flexible, enjoyable and easier for all Australians.

As part of our commitment to the towing community, Elecbreakes wants to ensure every trip with your trailer or caravan in tow is a safe, smooth and legal one.

Due to the complex nature of towing, licensing and road rules across Australia's states and territories, we know it can be easier said than done to source the information you need about towing regulations.

Our **Towing Safety Guidelines ebook** is aimed at providing useful information for novice and experienced towers alike.





10 SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT BIG TRIP.



1

OPTIMISE YOUR CARAVAN LOAD DISTRIBUTION

Caravan load distribution is vital for several reasons, and the foremost being to keep your rig under control and safe while driving.

Ensure that the weight within your caravan distributes so that it doesn't shift during travel, cause unnecessary trailer sway or impact on your steering.

By optimising the distribution of your load, you can significantly reduce trailer sway and other potential caravan towing issues. The correct distribution of weight allows sway controls and ensures that your towball weight is within the recommended range.

A fundamental guiding principle for optimum caravan load distribution is to store the heaviest gear in the area above the axle. You can then distribute all remaining smaller gear evenly throughout the rest of the space.

Other heavy equipment such as gas cylinders and spare tyres should always be kept in the positions recommended by the caravan manufacturer for your specific model.

2

MIND THE GAP

If you haven't done a course, keep a few things in mind when driving.

One of these is to keep your distance. If your vehicle and van or camper trailer measure 7.5 metres long or more, you must stay 200 metres from the car in front unless you're overtaking.



BY OPTIMISING THE DISTRIBUTION OF YOUR LOAD, YOU CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE TRAILER SWAY AND OTHER POTENTIAL ISSUES WHEN TOWING YOUR CARAVAN.

TICK OFF YOUR CARAVAN CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU HIT THE ROAD

Prepping for a travel adventure is exciting, but in the excitement, don't forget safety. Before you hit the road, you need to thoroughly check the caravan to ensure a safe and secure trip ahead. Here are some of the primary checks you should make:

STEP 1 Check everything

Check the tyre pressure on the caravan and tow vehicle, spares, oil and fuel levels, trailer tow lights, breakaway system, electric brake controller and make sure gas bottles are turned off.

STEP 2 Ensure everything is secure

Make sure all windows, doors and latches are fastened and ensure all loose items in the caravan are secured.

STEP 3 Check your battery systems

Regardless of the type of battery system you use, including dual battery systems, make sure it's all in working order before you take off.

STEP 4 Fire and safety


Check the smoke alarm in the caravan and make sure you have a fire extinguisher and/or fire blanket packed. Check that your first aid kit is stocked up and ready for use if needed. It's a good idea to keep the first aid kit in the car rather than the caravan so you still have it with you if you unhitch at a campsite and head off to town for the day.

STEP 5 Double-check your packing list

A packing list should cater to your lifestyle and how you travel, these include:

- ☑ Rubbish bags.
- ☑ Canvas bags.
- ☑ Baby wipes.
- ☑ Device chargers.
- ☑ Gaffer tape.
- ☑ Tools.
- ☑ Rags.
- ☑ Rubber backed rug.
- ☑ Snacks.
- ☑ Mini vacuum.
- ☑ Dustpan and brush.
- ☑ Folding tables and chairs.
- ☑ Camera.
- ☑ Board games for entertainment.
- ☑ Fishing gear.
- ☑ Umbrellas and raincoats.
- ☑ Sunscreen and hats.
- ☑ Torches, matches, and firelighters.
- ☑ Bath towels.
- ☑ Toaster and kettle.
- ☑ Extension cords.
- ☑ Power boards.
- ☑ Tupperware containers.
- ☑ Toiletry essentials, including toothpaste, toilet paper, and soap.



 elecbrakes™



**PREPPING FOR A TRAVEL
ADVENTURE IS EXCITING,
BUT IN THE EXCITEMENT,
DON'T FORGET SAFETY.**

ENSURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT LICENSE TO TOW YOUR CARAVAN

If you're a teenager interested in towing, you may have already asked yourself "what license do I need to tow a caravan?". As a young red or green P-plater, you may not be considering purchasing your own trailer or caravan any time soon. But for plenty of family's, the question of who is allowed to drive on a long road trip is an important one to answer. Likewise, any business owner with work trailers needs to know – "can you tow a trailer on your Ps?".

Can A Learner Driver Tow A Trailer?

Like many rules or regulations in the world of towing, the answer to the question "are learner drivers allowed to tow a trailer?" is – it depends. See the following break down for the differing rules in each state or territory:

New South Wales: No. Learner drivers are not allowed to tow anything.

Victoria: No. No towing allowed for L-platers in VIC either.

Queensland: Yes. You CAN tow on your learner's permit in QLD.

Western Australia: Yes. You can also tow on your L-plates in WA.

South Australia: Yes. SA doesn't restrict learner's permit holders from towing.

Tasmania: No. Tasmania has two levels of L plates, L1 and L2. Neither are allowed to tow.

Australian Capital Territory: Kind of. Yes, as long as the trailer weight does not exceed 750kg GVM.

Northern Territory: Yes. Learner's permit holders may tow in the NT.



A decorative topographic map of Australia is positioned on the left side of the page, showing contour lines and geographical features.

Can P1 Drivers Tow Trailers?

Can a red P-plater tow a trailer or caravan? In some cases yes, in some cases no:

New South Wales: Yes. Except you cannot tow another vehicle with an unladen mass of more than 250kg in NSW.

Victoria: No. You cannot tow on your P1 license in VIC. There are some exceptions to this rule, for example, if your boss asks you to tow as part of your employment.

Queensland: Yes. You may tow on your P-plates in QLD.

Western Australia: Yes. P1 drivers are able to tow in WA.

South Australia: Yes. You can tow trailers unrestricted on red P-plates in SA.

Tasmania: Yes. You can tow as a P1 driver in Tasmania.

Australian Capital Territory: Kind of. Within the first 12 months of holding a provisional license, you must not tow a trailer with a GVM above 750kg in the ACT.

Northern Territory: Yes. Towing is allowed on P-plates in the NT.

Can I Tow A Trailer On Green P Plates?

Can a P2 driver tow a trailer? Here are the regulations in each state and territory:

New South Wales: Yes. You may tow on your green P-plates in NSW.

Victoria: Yes. You can also tow on your green P-plates in Victoria.

Queensland: Yes. You may tow on your P-plates in QLD.

Western Australia: Yes. P2 drivers are able to tow in WA.

South Australia: Yes. You can tow trailers unrestricted on green P-plates in SA.

Tasmania: Yes. You can tow as a P2 driver in Tasmania.

Australian Capital Territory: Kind of. There is only one provisional license stage in the ACT. Within the first 12 months of holding a provisional license, you must not tow a trailer with a GVM above 750kg.

Northern Territory: Yes. There is only one provisional license stage in the NT as well and you are allowed to tow while on this P-plate.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOWING MIRRORS

Are towing mirrors a legal requirement in Australia? Yes.

This is covered in the relevant ADR, Vehicle Standard (Australian Design Rule 14/02 – Rear Vision Mirrors) 2006.

This regulation stipulates the minimum field of vision that your side mirrors are required to provide.

The exact details of this specification become quite complex and involve mathematical equations, but the basic rule of thumb is that you must have a clear view of the road behind and to each side of the driver.

The penalty for not complying with this ADR can be significant. For example in Victoria, failure to comply with this rule will set you back \$233.

PRACTICE REVERSING A CARAVAN

While planning your first big caravan adventure might not be top of mind, learning how to reverse the thing is a skill that you will be relying on more than you realise.

Reversing can be tricky at first, and it's an art you can master with some practice.

BEFORE YOU HEAD OFF:

- ☑ Hitch up your caravan and practice reversing at a quiet time of day in a familiar area near your home.
- ☑ Take your time and always use a spotter if you can.
- ☑ Check the area you're attempting to reverse into for any hazards such as tree branches, potholes, or obstacles like garbage bins or bicycles.
- ☑ When reversing a trailer, turn your steering wheel in the opposite direction to where you want the caravan to go, and this is where a slow and steady pace is significant to give you time to stop.
- ☑ Drive forward and start again if you start going off course. Remember to stay calm and be patient with yourself.

CHOOSE THE BEST ELECTRIC BRAKE CONTROLLERS FOR CARAVANS

According to the Vehicle Standard (Australian Design Rule 38/05 – Trailer Brake Systems) 2018, trailer's (including caravans) above 750kg Gross Trailer Mass (GTM) must be equipped with an efficient service brake system.

While this can be a mechanical override type brake system in smaller trailers, once the trailer is over 2,000kg, the law requires you to use an electric trailer brake system with an electric brake controller.

Even for caravans with a GTM between 750kg and 2,000kg, many towers find the security, safety and control provided by electric brakes fitted with a superior brake controller like Elecbrakes to be of great benefit.

Elecbrakes is the best brake controller for smooth brake control, offering the most responsive proportional brake control on the market.

When you tow a vehicle using Elecbrakes, the electric brakes on the caravan activates the trailer brakes based on your driving, which offers a seamless towing experience.

HOW IT WORKS

Elecbrakes is a trailer mounted electric brake controller, wired directly into the trailers electrical circuit via an easy to use "Plug & Play" adaptor. Elecbrakes draws power from the taillight circuit as well as the brake light circuit ensuring sufficient power is available for up to two braked axles.

[Click here to learn more](#)



🔌 "PLUG & PLAY" ADAPTORS

We have a range of adaptor choices to suit your trailer and tow vehicle so you can simply "plug & play" with an easy 10 minute installation.

🔌 WATERPROOF & SHOCKPROOF

Made in Australia and designed to withstand everything our rugged country can throw at it. Elecbrakes brake controllers are built to last.

🔌 MULTIPLE BRAKING PROGRAMS

Once you've found the perfect settings for a certain load or for particular conditions, you can save that as it's own preset and then quickly switch to those settings in future at the press of a button.

🔌 TRAILER MOUNTED FOR FLEXIBILITY

Because the device is mounted to your trailer and not wired into the dashboard of your tow vehicle, you can use multiple tow vehicles with no need for any vehicle modifications.

KNOW THE SPEED LIMIT FOR TOWING A TRAILER

While speed restrictions are simple enough when driving unhitched, once you're towing things get a little more complicated.

At the bare minimum, you should be able to drive at 80 km/h in any state or territory in Australia in an appropriate tow vehicle. Above that, you need to take into account the regulations of your state and also the recommendation of your vehicle manufacturer.

So how fast can you go towing a trailer? At the time of writing, the states and territories still don't have uniform laws in regards to maximum speed limits while towing.

These are the current towing speed limits in Australia:

NSW: In NSW, you're allowed to drive the full 110 km/h, but the combined weight of your vehicle and trailer/caravan must not exceed 4,500kg. If your rig exceed the weight limit, you're restricted to 100 km/h.

WA: In WA you're only allowed to drive at a maximum speed of 100 km/h while towing, regardless of weight.

Tasmania: You can drive at the maximum posted speed limit on any given road, so long as your GVM (Gross Vehicle Mass) does not exceed 12 tonnes.

QLD, VIC, ACT, SA & NT: All remaining states stipulate that towers drive to the prevailing conditions, but do not enforce a separate towing speed limit.



KNOW YOUR TOWING WEIGHTS

It's essential to understand how much towing weight your car or truck can handle to how heavy your caravan is. The tricky part is that to abide by the regulations and keep your insurance valid, and there's not just one weight for each of these measures. We've broken down the various acronyms below to help keep you on the straight and narrow.

Terminology for vehicle towing weights

Here are the four main terms you will come across:

▣ KERB WEIGHT

The kerb weight of the vehicle includes the driver, oil, and fuel that does not contain luggage or other supplies. Imagine you're parked at the kerb with a full tank of petrol, sitting behind the wheel of your car, ready to drive away from the caravan parks. The weight of your vehicle at that moment is your kerb weight.

▣ PAYLOAD

The payload is the combined weight of any other passengers, accessories and luggage you add on top of your kerb weight. The payload also includes the downward pressure of the trailer as added weight on the vehicle's towball.

▣ GROSS VEHICLE MASS (GVM)

The gross vehicle mass is your vehicle's kerb weight + the payload. The GVM is how much your tow vehicle weighs with:

- ☑ Fuel.
- ☑ Oil.
- ☑ All accessories and gear loaded.
- ☑ The driver.
- ☑ Passengers.
- ☑ The extra tow ball weight by a hitched trailer.

The GVM number is significant. Ensure it doesn't go any higher than the maximum GVM set by the vehicle manufacturer. If you drive a tow vehicle with a GVM higher than the allowed maximum, you'll be voiding your insurance, breaking the law and posing a safety risk to yourself and others. You can always find the GVM of your vehicle printed on its compliance plates.

▣ GROSS COMBINATION MASS (GCM)

This is the maximum weight that your fully-loaded vehicle and caravan can weigh together. This rating is set by the tow vehicle manufacturer.



**FOLLOW THE ROAD RULES,
CHECK YOUR WEIGHTS, AND
ENSURE YOUR CARAVAN IS IN
TOP CONDITION (INCLUDING
YOUR BRAKES).**

How to calculate caravan towing weights?

When you're heading on a trip with your caravan or trailer in tow, it's essential to take note of the total towing weight as this will determine if your vehicle can tow the load and whether or not it will be safe on the roads.

There are four weights to consider when it comes to towing a caravan:

☒ TARE MASS

The caravan's weight at the time of its manufacture with any factory installed accessories attached, with water tanks and gas bottles both empty.

☒ AGGREGATE TRAILER MASS (ATM)

The ATM is the maximum allowed caravan weight of your fully-loaded caravan, including all extra accessories, clothes, food, bikes and other luggage and including the weight of filling up water tanks and gas bottles. The VIN plate in your caravan will state its ATM set by the manufacturer and which you must not exceed for safety and legal reasons; this also includes the tow bar weight.

☒ GROSS TRAILER MASS (GTM)

The GTM is your caravan's actual weight when you have it fully loaded and hitched to the tow vehicle. Keep in mind that the tow vehicle will be taking a small amount of the weight from the caravan in the form of the tow ball weight. If you had a trailer loaded to precisely the limit of its ATM, the GTM would equal the ATM minus the towball weight.





IT'S ESSENTIAL TO TAKE NOTE OF THE TOTAL TOWING WEIGHT AS THIS WILL DETERMINE IF YOUR VEHICLE CAN TOW THE LOAD AND WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL BE SAFE ON THE ROADS.

▣ TOWBALL WEIGHT

The towball weight is the amount of downward force from the caravan's tow hitch exerted onto the tow ball of the vehicle towing it. A good rule of thumb that most trailer manufacturers recommend is to keep your towball weight in the range of 7% – 15% of the ATM. You can measure this weight by using a set of towball scales. If you find that your towball weight is either too heavy or too light, you can optimise it by adjusting the load distribution within your caravan. Head to your nearest weighbridge after the loading completion for your caravan and tow vehicle.

Use the following steps to ensure you're vehicle and caravan are under the limit for safe towing capacity:

1. First, weigh just the unhitched tow vehicle by itself on the weighbridge to check that you're within the Gross Vehicle Mass limit.
2. Hitch your caravan and drive your fully loaded caravan and tow vehicle onto the weighbridge together to check your gross combination mass (GMC).
3. Now drive forward, so the caravan is on the weighbridge behind you, but you have the tow vehicle off the weighbridge. If you keep the caravan hitched, this will give you your gross trailer mass (GTM).
4. Finally, unhitch your tow vehicle and weigh your fully loaded caravan to check that it's within the aggregate trailer mass (ATM) limit. If you find that you're over the ATM, this means that either you've overpacked or the original tare provided by your caravan manufacturer was incorrect.

NOTE: If you have any problems with weight distribution for either caravans or trailers, you can invest in weight distribution hitches to assist.

ENSURE YOU ARE INSURED

Make sure to contact your insurer before hitting the road to check you're covered. Many comprehensive car insurance policies do cover trailers, but generally only for third party damage or injury and often not for damage to the trailer itself.

In insurance policies where your trailer is covered for third party liability, this cover is often only active while the trailer is hitched to your tow vehicle. This means that if your trailer became unhitched and caused damage to another vehicle you may not be covered.

Do you need insurance to tow a caravan? —

You're not required to have trailer insurance in the same way that you need to have CTP for your tow vehicle.

But it's probably a good idea.



WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

If you need any advice or you're after a high quality brake controller, get in touch with our team today.

You can also jump on our website and [check out our how-to videos guidance](#) on preparing for your journey.

The most important thing when towing a caravan is that you travel safely.

Follow the road rules, check your weights, and ensure your caravan is in top condition (including your brakes and brake control), as this will ensure you have a great time on the roads, bringing back plenty of memories to share with friends and family.

Most importantly, have fun!



**TOWING
EVOLVED**

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