



## **Towing is very different from everyday driving**

Towing requires additional driving skills and safety precautions. As a driver, you have a legal responsibility to other road users when towing a trailer, caravan or another vehicle, to drive to suit the conditions

Towing will affect your vehicle with **decreased acceleration and braking performance** and **reduced vehicle control and manoeuvrability**. These effects become more pronounced on your vehicle as trailer size and the mass of the load increase.

## **Hitching Trailers**

### **Drivers must ensure:**

- Ensure the coupling socket and ball are a matching size.
- Check the coupling is securely fastened and latched when the trailer is connected.
- Check safety chain/s are properly connected. If two chains are fitted, cross them under the drawbar before they are attached to the towing vehicle.
- Check trailer brake and light connections are secure and all lights work.
- Disengage any reversing catch fitted to the trailer coupling (as used with over-run brakes).

## **Loading trailers**

### **Drivers must ensure:**

- The ATM specified by the trailer manufacturer is not exceeded
- The ball load specifications are not exceeded.
- The Gross Combination Vehicle Mass where given, is not exceeded.
- Lights, number plate and registration labels are not obscured in any way.
- The load is correctly positioned to give sufficient down weight on the coupling socket.
- Sufficiently strong load bindings such as webbing straps or chains secure your load.
- Ensure all doors, hatches, covers and any load or equipment are properly secured.

## **When travelling**

### **Drivers must ensure:**

- That any trailer is safely controllable by the towing vehicle. (see *Loading Trailers*)
- Any speed restrictions displayed on the towed item or Hire Contract are observed.
- Make one or two test stops at low speed to confirm the trailer brakes operate properly.
- Allow for the trailer's tendency to 'cut-in' on corners and curves.
- Allow longer distances for braking, overtaking and joining a traffic stream.
- Avoid sudden lane changes or changes of direction.
- Allow for the increased effects of cross-winds, passing vehicles and uneven road surfaces.
- Use a low gear when travelling downhill to increase vehicle control and reduce strain on brakes.
- Slow down well before entering corners and curves.
- Accelerator, brake and steering must be operated smoothly when towing.
- Correct tyre pressure is maintained.
- People are not permitted to ride in trailers.

*Unnecessary steering wheel movement should be avoided because sway or "snaking" of the vehicle and trailer may result. If sway occurs a steady speed or slight acceleration should be maintained if possible, until the sway ceases. The tow vehicle's brakes should only be applied as a last resort.*

## **Un-hitching Trailers**

### **Drivers must ensure:**

- Ground is firm and level.
- Handbrake if fitted is engaged.
- Wheels are chocked.
- Jockey Wheel is secured in the down position.
- It is preferable to have the trailer empty (without load).

The information detailed below is a replication of the RACQ **Rules About What You Can Tow** and is not a full comprehensive towing guide.

Please visit the Transport and Main Roads website (<http://tmr.qld.gov.au>) and search under **Loads and Towing** for comprehensive information.



### Rules about what you can tow

Passenger vehicles and their derivatives, light commercial vehicles and 4WDs with a Gross Vehicle Mass of less than 4.5 tonnes can tow a trailer with an Aggregate Trailer Mass up to:

The lesser of:

- The tow vehicle manufacturer's recommended maximum trailer towing mass or
- The tow vehicle's towbar rating

**Towing specifications are contained in the vehicle's owner's handbook**, which will also specify any additional equipment that must be fitted, and any requirements that must be met. This could include transmission and power steering coolers, revised suspension and load distribution hitches. **Some vehicles also have speed restrictions when towing certain weights.**

You also have a responsibility to ensure that the Ball Load specification and the Gross Combination Vehicle Mass, where given, are not exceeded and that any trailer is safely controllable by the towing vehicle.

### When the towing capacity is not specified

In the rare event a vehicle manufacturer has not specified the towing capacity, or it genuinely cannot be identified, Queensland Transport allows the towing of a trailer:

- One and a half times the unladen mass of the towing vehicle, if the trailer is fitted with brakes, or,
- If the trailer is not fitted with brakes, 750kg GTM or the unladen mass of the towing vehicle, whichever is the lesser.

Note that the masses given above only represent the maximum legally allowable towing mass and do not take into account a range of other important factors that affect the vehicle's safe maximum towing capacity. These include the:

- design and construction of the vehicle, and
- capacity of the towbar.

These factors may decrease a vehicle's towing capacity to below that given above.

No information is provided about acceptable tow ball loads when towing specifications are not available. However the above factors, along with the vehicle's rear axle load rating and tyre load rating will need to be considered in determining an acceptable ball load.

If there is any **doubt about a vehicle's towing capacity we recommend you seek advice from a reputable tow bar manufacturer** who may be able to provide professional advice about its suitability for the application.

Failure to follow the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations may adversely affect the vehicle's safety, durability, warranty and insurance cover.

The information provided in **this fact sheet is intended as a general guide only**. You should carry out further research and investigations into the topics outlined above prior to implementing any actions or recommendations.