

1st May, 2016.

I am a farmer in southern NSW, and would like to make a submission regarding “Red Tape” in Agriculture, with specific reference to the regulation of Oversize / Overmass agricultural vehicle movements. This is our experience this year with the new RMS Oversize Overmass Movement regulations that came into effect on 6th January, 2014.

As with a large number of farmers, we have to take our sowing plant on the local roads during sowing to get from one part of the farm to another. The distance we need to travel is about 20km, so it's not a very long distance, but we can't run our farming business without going on the roads from time to time. It is usually only 2-4 times during sowing, and then twice during spring if we have to work up a paddock, though we never know exactly when (if) it will be because it depends on the rain.

Our sowing plant consists of our tractor, air seeder bin, and the sowing bar. The most compact width of our plant is 6.7m. Normally, a movement is classified as “High Risk” by the RMS if it is wider than 6.0m. In the Western Zone, it is 6.5metres.

So, to take our sowing plant combination on the road we needed to complete a Class 1 Special Purpose Vehicle or Agricultural Vehicle Permit application form. Also, because our movement is classified as High Risk, we needed to complete a Transport Management Plan (TMP) and Transport Management Plan Coversheet. According to the RMS Fact Sheet ...”The TMP provides an increased planning and execution focus for “High Risk” OSOM movements to ensure that these movements are carried out in a safe, responsible manner with reduced impact on other road users and road infrastructure.” The example of a transport management plan given on the RMS website is 24 pages long.

Additionally, because our plant is a multi articulated combination (air seeder) we needed to supply a written statement from the manufacturer or retailer stating that the combination is “designed to function as a unit”. So we did that.

Then, we had to provide approvals from Local Councils where our route involves travel on a council road. We use roads in two Council shires, so needed to go through two approval procedures. Which we did.

Then, because our proposed route crossed a railway crossing, we needed approval from the relevant Rail Infrastructure Manager. So we got that.

Then, after submitting seven different applications/approvals/letters, we were delighted to receive our Oversize Permit from the RMS. However, I then read on it that we needed to contact Police to see if there were any additional escort requirements and that, if needed, there would be a booking fee involved.

So, now that we have our permit, we can travel safely on the roads with front and rear escort vehicles and oversize signs, flags and flashing lights.

Our permit is only valid for a maximum of 12 months, so I have to go through this whole process again next year – and, also, there is an annual fee of \$70.00 as a sweetener!

As you can see, this was a very time consuming process to get the permit we needed. If we didn't have this permit then we could be fined \$10,000 and our insurance policy would not be valid if anything happened and we may lose the farm.

Farmers want to comply with the legislation, but this area of OMOS permits requires too much paperwork. The paperwork does not make movements any safer. The physical requirements of front and rear pilot vehicles and red flags, flashing lights and signs do make the roads safer for other road users. Also, restricting movements during busy times and after dark is valid. However, telling someone in Sydney that we are travelling on the road is not going to make anything safer.

The South Australian regulations in this area are very sensible and serve as a good model for NSW.