



# Are you planning to buy a new towing vehicle or caravan?

**Before making a purchase, it's essential to find out if the vehicle and caravan combination comply with towing capacity regulations.**

In this fact sheet, we cover important information to help you make the right choice.

## **Weights and what they mean**

For the safety of your passengers, yourself and other road users, you must follow the manufacturer's specifications regarding the legal towing capacity for the tow vehicle and caravan.

Exceeding these limits can affect stability and vehicle control, and result in a crash causing serious injuries or death. Overloading could also lead to an insurance claim being denied.

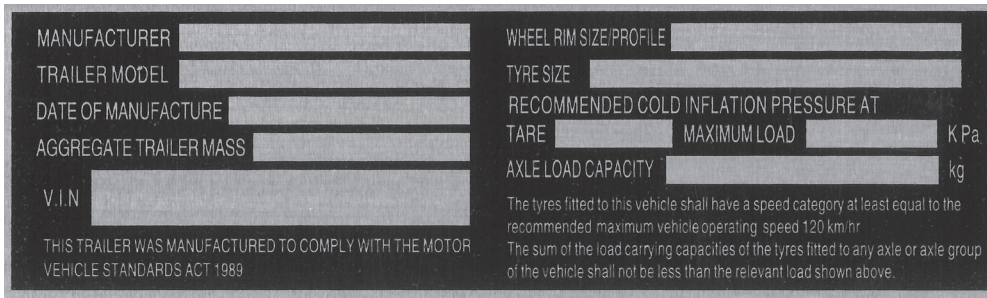
## **Tow vehicle weights**

- Kerb Weight is the weight of the tow vehicle unloaded. Accessories like bull bars, winches, extra spare tyres and batteries, canopies and roof racks can substantially increase this figure.
- Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) is the weight of the tow vehicle when it's fully loaded to the maximum allowable weight, including passengers.
- Tow Ball Mass (TBM) is the amount of weight the caravan applies to the tow ball on the towing vehicle.

## **Caravan weights**

- Tare Mass (TM) is the weight of the caravan unloaded (empty water tanks, empty LPG bottles, no fuel and no personal effects or passengers).
- Gross Trailer Mass (GTM) is the weight of the caravan axel(s) loaded and connected to the tow vehicle.
- Aggregate Trailer Mass (ATM) is the maximum the caravan can weigh once loaded, but not connected to the tow vehicle. It mustn't be exceeded.
- Gross Combination Mass (GCM) is the total weight of the caravan and the tow vehicle fully loaded, including passengers and their luggage.





### Compliance plate

A compliance plate displays unique information about the vehicle it's attached to. It shows details identifying the vehicle, and the load ratings the manufacturer has set to comply with the Motor Vehicle Standards.

The information on the plate may influence your choice of caravan or camper trailer, to ensure compatibility with the tow vehicle. The compliance plate can be found on the drawbar of the trailer, inside the caravan near the main door, or elsewhere in the caravan.

### Towing course

Once you've completed your research and are confident you have a compatible tow vehicle and caravan combination, it's time to sign up for a towing course. This will provide you with the knowledge and skills to understand:

- the legal requirements for the tow vehicle and caravan
- how to set up your caravan before heading off and when you arrive at your destination, including hitching and unhitching
- how to weigh the tow vehicle and caravan
- safe and defensive driving techniques while towing
- how to reverse a caravan using properly adjusted mirrors and other forms of guidance
- a range of other useful tips.

### Best towing practice

- Complete a towing course.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions and recommendations for the tow vehicle and caravan.
- If in doubt, weigh your tow vehicle and caravan before departure.
- Ensure the load is correctly distributed and secured.
- Make sure you've hitched both vehicles correctly, including crossing the safety chains that support the drawbar. This could prevent the drawbar dropping to the ground if the coupling fails or there's a disconnection. It can also prevent chains dragging on the road, which can cause wear.

- Check the tow ball tension.
- Check the tyre pressure on the tow vehicle and caravan, including spare wheels.
- Check and adjust the mirrors.
- Check the lights on the tow vehicle and caravan.
- Check the operation of the braking system on the caravan and make sure the braking control in the towing vehicle is correctly set.
- Check the tow vehicle and caravan before you leave, during the trip and at your destination.

### South Australian crash statistics

Data collected between 2011 and 2021 shows how many caravans were involved in casualty crashes in South Australia.

Of the 556 reported caravan-related crashes, there were:

- 12 fatalities
- 26 serious injuries
- 107 minor injuries
- 115 rollovers
- 103 rear-end collisions
- 36 head-on collisions
- 107 side-swipes
- 59 right-angle collisions
- 1 in 4 caravan crashes resulting in injury or death were due to a roll over.
- 3 in 5 fatal crashes were as a result of head on collisions.

### We're here to help

RAA provides courses on safe towing. Call 8202 4444 for more information or to book a course  
[raa.com.au/safe-caravan-and-trailer-use](http://raa.com.au/safe-caravan-and-trailer-use)