



Analysis of Mobile Crane Permit Data in QLD

November 2021

The Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA)

Analysis performed using data provided by the National Heavy Vehicle
Regulator (NHVR) [1]



Acknowledgments

CICA would like to acknowledge Steven Miller and Belinda Bray from the NHVR for providing the source data used for this report and assisting with any queries regarding the permit process at the NHVR, as well as John Gordon from TCA for providing IAP enrolment information.

Abstract

In QLD all terrain mobile cranes with 3-axles or greater must obtain *mass or dimension exemption permits* to access a significant portion of the road network. As a result of Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) policy on managing structures, most of these permits are vehicle and route specific, have a maximum duration of 35 days and are only valid for a single trip. Since its inception it was known that this unique policy had a significant impact on permit volumes and associated resources relative to other jurisdictions, but this impact had not been quantified.

To attain a quantitative overview of the permit situation in QLD and how this compares with other states, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), who administer and regulate road access for mobile cranes, provided The Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA) with data detailing the *mass or dimension exemption permit* applications submitted for mobile cranes in both QLD and NSW.

The data was analysed to compare the total number of permit applications in QLD and NSW as well as extract key metrics of the permit process in QLD such as mean processing time for applications. Other metrics were also extracted from the data to provide insight into the administrative burden associated with the policy and whether it is resource effective in its approach to risk management.

The results of the analysis suggest that there are extremely significant resources consumed as a result of TMR's approach to structure management. This is made evident when comparing permit data with neighbouring state NSW where Transport for NSW (TfNSW) does not share the same approach to structure management. 1405% more permits were submitted in QLD compared to NSW even though QLD has a lower number of concerned vehicles.

The highly repetitive permit process in QLD resulted in refused applications in less than 1% of cases and most applications confirmed existing assessment results from TMR (i.e. granted 'Renew Permit' applications). The analysis found high rates of time extension requests from TMR, as well as high rates of exceeding legislated timeframes for 'Renew Permit' applications. This suggests the processes being used by TMR cannot be adequately managed in the timeframes developed and legislated under the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL).



To reduce permit volumes and the associated resource consumption in QLD it is recommended that TMR's policy and processes regarding road access for mobile cranes be reviewed and include investigation into the structure management approach, the need of permits in road access, potential gazette and pre-approval options and acceptance of 'Multiple Trips' permit applications.

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1 Introduction

In Australia the public road network is managed by a variety of entities including state road transport authorities, local councils and third parties. The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) controls 33 384 km of the road network in QLD including about 6500 bridges and major culverts [2, 3]. Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) are responsible for approximately 21 000 km of the road network in NSW including over 5000 bridges [4].

Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) such as mobile cranes generally do not meet the mass and dimension requirements for general access to the public road network in Australia. In states covered by the Heavy Vehicle National Law (HVNL), these vehicles must have a valid *mass or dimension exemption* to operate on public roads. This exemption is issued by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), however, consent for the exemption must first be obtained from all relevant road managers (state road transport authorities, local councils and third parties).

In QLD, all terrain mobile cranes with 3-axles or greater must obtain *mass or dimension exemption permits* to access a significant portion of the road network. This contrasts with other states such as NSW where the *mass or dimension exemption* is provided to most of these vehicles via a notice which removes the need for vehicle specific permits.

In QLD, most of these permits are vehicle and route specific, have a maximum duration of 35 days and are only valid for a single trip. The limited nature of these permits is a result of Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) policy on managing structures (bridges and major culverts). This policy is unique in states covered by the HVNL and it has resulted in significant difficulties for the crane industry.

To obtain an overview of the permit situation in QLD for these vehicles and how it compares to other states, the NHVR provided The Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA) with data detailing the *mass or dimension exemption permit* applications submitted for mobile cranes in both QLD and NSW. For each of these states, the data covers the period from when all delegations had been returned to the NHVR to 30 September 2021. In QLD, the return of delegations was completed in December 2019 and in NSW this was completed in June 2020. To allow a direct comparison between the two

states, data was only used from June 2020 onwards for this analysis. Details of the information included in the data is provided in Appendix B.

This data is used to quantify the consequences of the TMR policy for these vehicles and compare permit volumes with NSW which has a more progressive approach to road access. The data is also used to demonstrate the administrative burden associated with the policy and identify whether the policy is resource effective in its approach to risk management.

2 Results

State	IAP Category	Vehicles
QLD	QLD IAP SPV Category 1	75
	QLD IAP SPV Category 2	266
	QLD IAP SPV Category 3	33
NSW	NSW IAP SPV Level 2	93
	NSW IAP SPV Level 3	183
	NSW IAP SPV Level 4	206
	NSW IAP SPV Level 5	10
	NSW IAP SPV Level 6	8

Table 2.1: *Number of mobile cranes in NSW and QLD. The Intelligent Access Program (IAP) categories included, cover all-terrain cranes with 3 or more axles. All vehicles of this type are required to be enrolled in IAP in both NSW and QLD. Numbers based on IAP enrolment at the end of September 2021 [5]. Note: a small number of vehicles in NSW may be enrolled in multiple categories so the categories cannot be accurately summed together.*

The data in Table 2.1 shows that there are significantly more of the concerned vehicles operating in NSW compared to QLD. NSW and QLD have differing categories for mobile cranes, but comparisons can be approximated using the following rough equivalencies [6, 7]:

QLD IAP SPV Category 1 → NSW IAP SPV Level 2

QLD IAP SPV Category 2 → NSW IAP SPV Levels 3 & 4

QLD IAP SPV Category 3 → NSW IAP SPV Levels 5 & 6

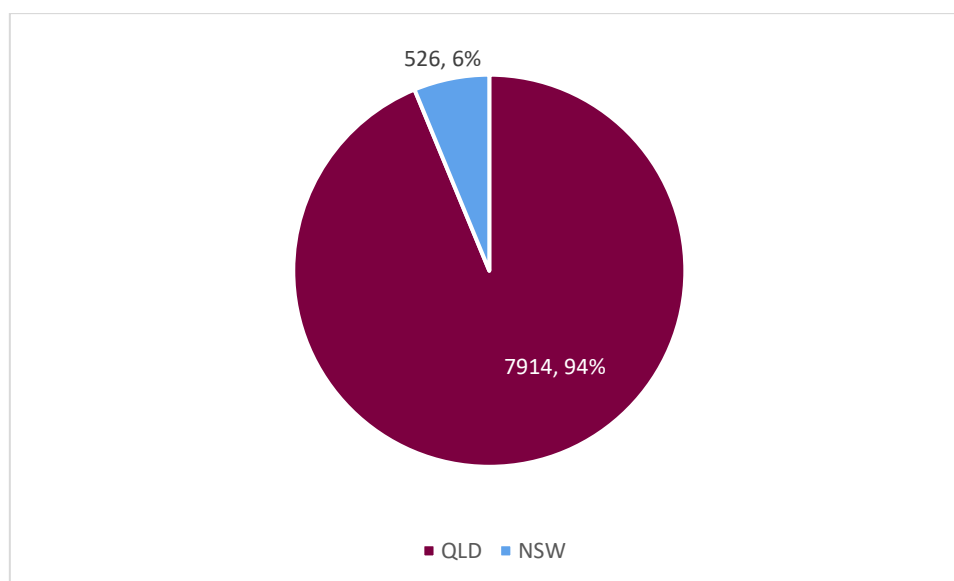


Figure 2.1: Total number of mass or dimension exemption permit applications submitted in QLD and NSW. Only includes applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted since 1 June 2020 with a TMR or TfNSW consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021 [1].

From Figure 2.1 it can be determined that **1405% more permits** were submitted in QLD compared to NSW.

Duration Type	Total number
Single Trip	6905
Multiple Trips	204
Period Permit	392
Not specified	72
All Types	7573

Table 2.2: Mass or dimension exemption permit applications by duration type (QLD). Only includes applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed (see Table A.1) [1].

A significant majority of the applications submitted in QLD were for Single Trip applications (see Table 2.2). Due to this, the proceeding results focus predominately on this duration type. In QLD, single trip permits are issued for IAP Category 1 and 2 vehicles to cross so called "Single Trip" structures as well as to IAP category 3 vehicles for all journeys.

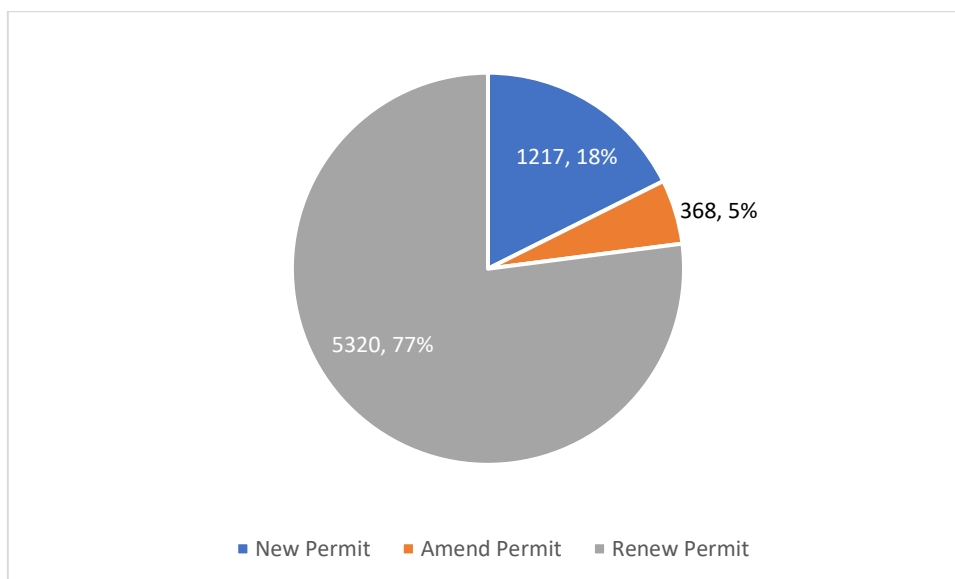


Figure 2.2: Single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

From Figure 2.2 a majority (77%) of the 6905 single trip permit applications in QLD were to renew existing permits. Single trip permits are issued for a maximum duration of 35 days and are valid for a single journey. The permit holder can apply to renew the permit prior to its expiration which, if granted, provides a permit for another 35 days and another single journey.

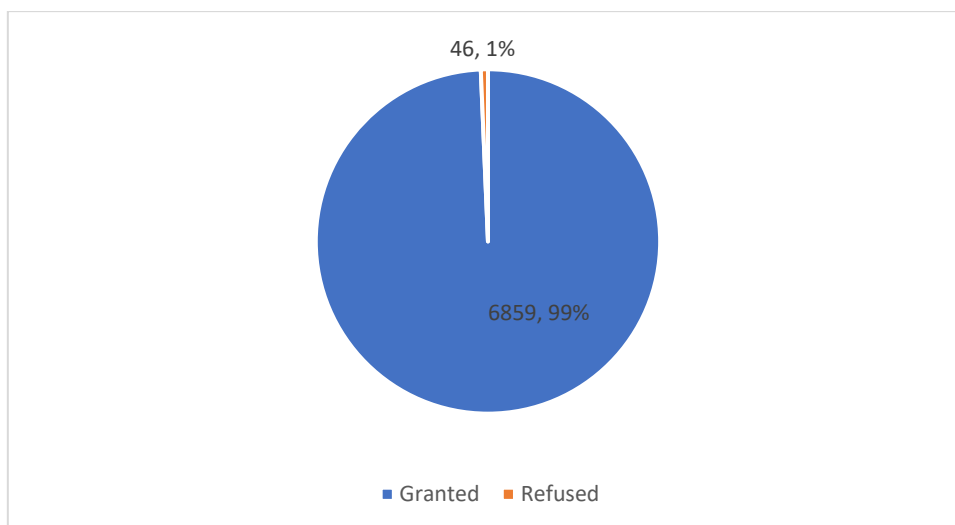


Figure 2.3: Single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by TMR consent outcome (QLD). Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Road managers can either grant or refuse a permit application. Applications can only be refused on certain grounds detailed in the HVNL. Figure 2.3 shows that over 99% of applications sent to TMR for consent were granted.

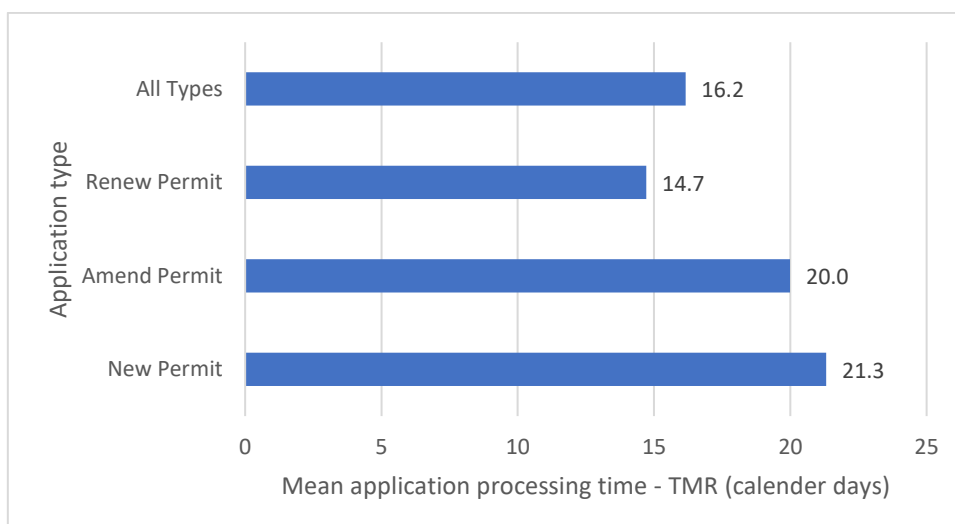


Figure 2.4: TMR processing time for single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Single trip permit applications for SPVs are generally vehicle specific (valid only for a single VIN/Chassis No.) and contain details of the requested route or area. Applications are submitted to the NHVR who send consent requests to the road managers of any roads that are not already approved for the vehicle.

Under the HVNL legislation, road managers have 28 days to respond to a consent request for 'New Permit' and 'Amend Permit' applications unless granted a time extension. Since 'Renew Permit' applications are a repeat of an existing permit, the HVNL legislates road managers 14 days to respond to a consent request for this application type unless granted a time extension [8]. Figure 2.4 details the mean time taken by TMR to provide a response to a consent request for each permit application type.

It is important to note that if a road manager does not respond to a 'Renew Permit' application within the 14 days and no time extension has been granted, the previous consent response is automatically renewed. The previous consent response is also automatically renewed if the road manager exceeds an extension of time that has been granted. This automatic consent renewal due to lack of response from TMR within the legislated time frame occurred in 31% of single trip 'Renew Permit' applications (see Figure 2.5). This automatic consent renewal will affect the processing time for 'Renew Permit' applications, resulting in the 14.7 day mean shown in Figure 2.4 being an under representation.

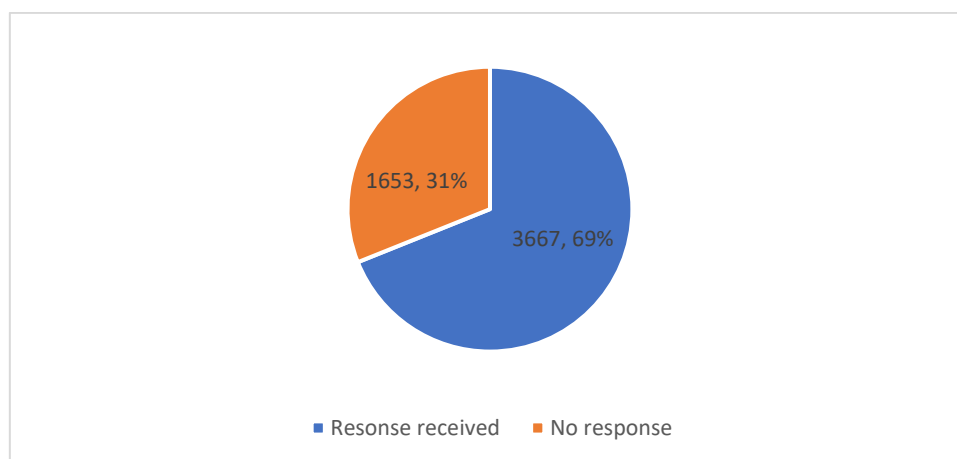


Figure 2.5: TMR consent response to single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications, renew permit application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications with renew permit application type for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

If a road manager considers a route assessment is necessary for deciding whether to give or not to give consent, the NHVR can grant an extension of time. The applicant is notified when a road manager requests an extension of time and can provide input which the NHVR considers before granting or refusing the extension request.

TMR were granted an extension of time on 31% of 'Renew Permit' applications (see Table 2.3).

Application Type	Total number	Extension of time granted (TMR)	% of total with extension of time granted
New Permit	1217	209	17%
Amend Permit	368	19	5%
Renew Permit	5320	1666	31%
All Types	6905	1894	27%

Table 2.3: Single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications with an extension of time granted to TMR by application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

The legislated time periods for mass or dimension exemption permit applications stated in the HVNL only cover the time that consent requests are with road managers. The time that the NHVR takes to process an application and issue the application outcome is not legislated under the HVNL. This time is in addition to the processing time of road managers and therefore the total time from when an application is submitted to when an outcome is issued, includes both NHVR processing time as well as road manager processing time. Figure 2.6 shows the mean total processing time for the different application types.

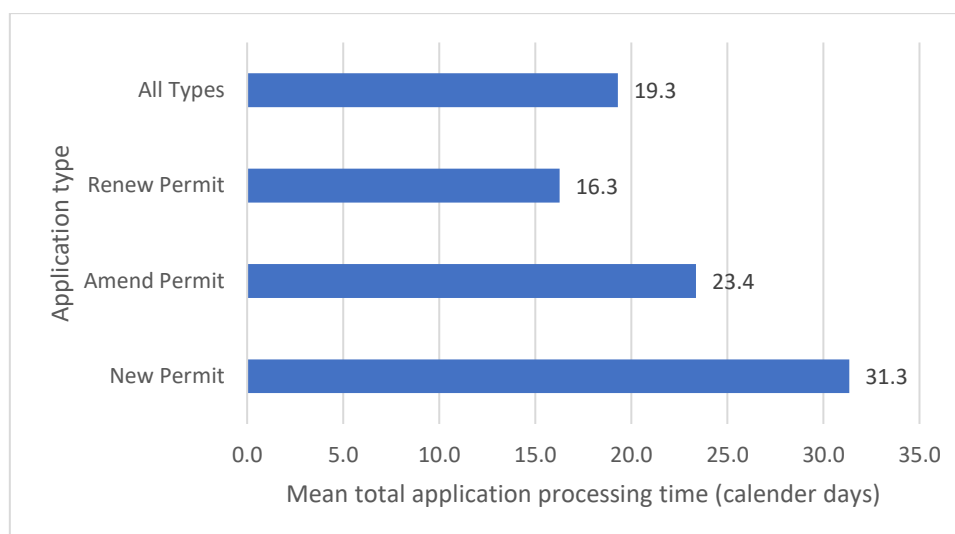


Figure 2.6: Mean total processing time for single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by application type (QLD). Total processing time taken from date of application submission to the date that consent outcome is complete. Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Application Type	Total number	Mean total application processing time (days)	Total cumulative processing time (years)
New Permit	1217	31.3	104.5
Amend Permit	368	23.4	23.6
Renew Permit	5320	16.3	237.2
All Types	6905	19.3	365.2

Table 2.4: Cumulative processing time for single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by application type (QLD). Only includes applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Combining the mean total application processing time with the total number of applications shows that applicants in QLD have waited a combined total of 365 years for single trip permits (see Table 2.4).

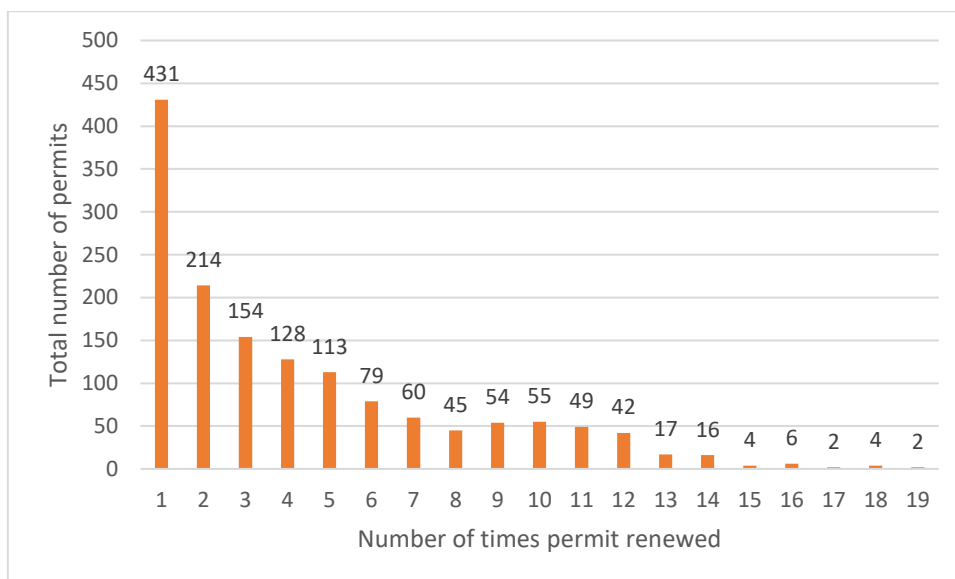


Figure 2.7: Number of times single trip mass or dimension exemption permits are renewed (QLD). Only includes single trip permits for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Only permits that have been renewed are included. Revisions of a permit are treated as separate individual permits. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Single Trip Permits in QLD were often renewed multiple times as can be seen in Figure 2.7 where there are examples of permits being renewed up to 19 times.

Revisions of a permit were treated as separate permits because a new revision is created when a permit is amended. Amended permits can have additional routes and contain differing road managers than the original permit and therefore the Amendment is processed similarly to a 'New Permit' application rather than a 'Renew Permit' application.

3 Discussion

The data shows that 1405% more permits were submitted for the concerned vehicles in QLD compared to NSW (see Figure 2.1) even though there are significantly less of these vehicles in QLD (see Table 2.1). This demonstrates the significant impact of TMR's policy of issuing single trip permits with a duration of 35 days for these vehicles. In Queensland 6905 of the 7973 applications processed were single trip applications (see Table 2.2). This suggests that TMR are managing structures in a way not required in NSW.

Figure 2.2 shows that 77% of single trip applications in QLD were to renew existing permits and this ratio has increased over time (see Figure A.2). This demonstrates the repetitive nature of TMR's process. Coupled with the fact that less than 1% of applications were refused by TMR (see Figure 2.3), this highlights that significant resources are directed at confirming an existing result.

Each permit application has a fee (currently \$76 per application [9]) and places administrative burden on industry, TMR and the NHVR. Using the current rate of \$76 per application, the cost to industry of 7973 QLD applications would be upwards of \$600 000 compared to under \$40 000 for 526 NSW applications. This is over and above the administration costs to industry, for managing road access for their vehicle fleet. Each permit application requires processing by an NHVR access facilitator as well as employees within TMR which also come at a cost, albeit paid by the taxpayer.

TMR's *mean* processing time for consent requests in 'Renew Permit' applications was over 14 days (see Figure 2.4). Due to this, TMR exceeded the legislated time for processing a consent request for 31% of 'Renew Permit' applications (see Figure 2.5). This occurred even though TMR was granted an extension of time for 31% of 'Renew Permit' applications (see Table 2.3). These values strongly suggest that the processes being used by TMR cannot be adequately managed in the timeframe developed and legislated under the HVNL.

Mean total processing times for 'Renew Permit' applications was 16.3 days (see Figure 2.6). For single trip permits, each permit is only valid for a single return journey. Since a permit cannot be renewed until it has been issued, significant difficulties arise when multiple trips within short time

periods are required. Using the mean processing time, it would not be possible to perform more than 2 trips in any month period using a single trip permit that is renewed. If multiple trips along the same route in a short time frame are required, an applicant must apply for multiple 'New Permit' applications. Therefore, there is a high likelihood that a significant number of 'New Permit' applications were identical to existing permits or other applications being processed for an applicant. The NHVR implemented the ability for applicants to apply for 'Multiple Trips' permits to avoid this issue, but TMR do not accept applications of this type.

Due to most of the permits in QLD only being issued for 35 days and being valid for a single trip, permits are often renewed a significant number of times, up to 19 times in some cases (see Figure 2.7). The large number of permits being consecutively renewed (and therefore approved by TMR) in addition to the less than 1% refusal rate, suggest that the results of the assessments performed by TMR are not significantly changing over time.

Like other jurisdictions, TMR have documented frequencies at which structures are to be inspected. The frequency of inspections differs depending on the structure type and condition; however, these inspections will generally not occur more than once every 6 months [10]. Therefore, most structures will not be inspected between the time a permit is issued and a 'Renew Permit' application is assessed by TMR. This suggests that the assessments performed by TMR will often be based on the same structure condition data as previous assessments.

4 Conclusions

The large volume of permits for SPVs in QLD compared to NSW suggests that TMR are treating the structures under their management in a unique, resource heavy manner. This is compounded by the fact that there are less of the concerned vehicles in QLD. The data used in this report does not provide insight into TMR's reasoning for this approach, however, as the number of structures is comparable between the two states and due to bridge design standards being applied nationally in Australia, it is unlikely that differences in infrastructure between NSW and QLD can solely account for the large difference in permit volumes.

TMR's policy of only granting these mobile cranes single trip, 35-day permits has created a highly repetitive, resource intensive process to confirm existing results. This is evident from the high proportion of 'Renew Permit' applications and very low refusal rate in QLD.

This highly repetitive process imposes a significant resource burden on TMR and the NHVR as well as industry, which has paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in permit application fees on top of the administration costs of managing the road access process.

The long processing times of applications with TMR, particularly for 'Renew Permit' applications, coupled with the significant rates of non-compliance with the legislated timeframes strongly suggest that the processes employed by TMR cannot be adequately managed in the timeframes developed and legislated under the HVNL.

The 35-day, single trip validity of permits and long processing times for 'Renew Permit' applications creates a secondary problem in which 'New Permit' applications must be submitted for multiple trips to be possible in a short timeframe. Therefore, it is highly likely that there were duplicates of the same consent request assessed by TMR in the form of 'New Permit' applications rather than 'Renew Permit' applications as the NHVR permit system is designed. This is a result of TMR's refusal to accept 'Multiple Trips' permit applications.

Due to the validity, single trip permits were consecutively renewed for many cases. The large number of permits being consecutively renewed (and therefore approved by TMR) in addition to the less than 1% refusal

rate suggest that the results of the assessments performed by TMR are not significantly changing over time.

This analysis suggests that there are extremely significant resources consumed as a result of TMR's approach to structure management. This is made evident when comparing permit data with neighbouring state NSW where TfNSW does not share the same approach to structure management.

As structure management is a risk-based activity informed by structural inspection reports, the results suggest that TMR either take a more conservative approach or have a system reliant on controlling risk by treating vehicle movements in isolation and using permits as a tracking mechanism. Regardless of the basis underpinning TMR's policy, it clearly results in the consumption of significantly greater resources in the administration of road access compared to NSW.

To reduce permit volumes and the associated resource consumption in QLD it is recommended that TMR's policy and processes regarding road access for mobile cranes be reviewed. Any review should include investigation into the structure management approach, the need of permits in road access, potential gazette and pre-approval options and acceptance of 'Multiple Trips' permit applications.

5 References

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Appendix A Additional data plots

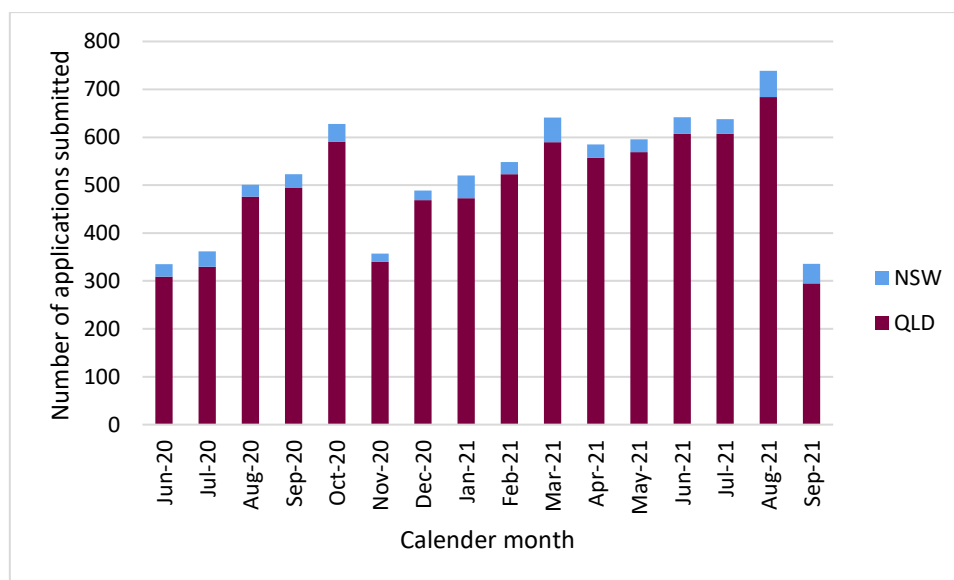


Figure A.1: Total number of mass or dimension exemption permit applications submitted by month in QLD and NSW. Only includes applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted since 1 June 2020 with a TMR or TfNSW consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021 [1].

Application Outcome	Total number	
Granted - Pre-Approval	334	341
Closed - Withdrawn	3	
Closed - Other	4	
Granted	22	7573
Granted With Conditions	5786	
Granted - Expedited	1714	
Refused	51	7914
All outcomes		

Table A.1: Mass or dimension exemption permit applications by TMR consent outcome (QLD). Only includes applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021 [1].

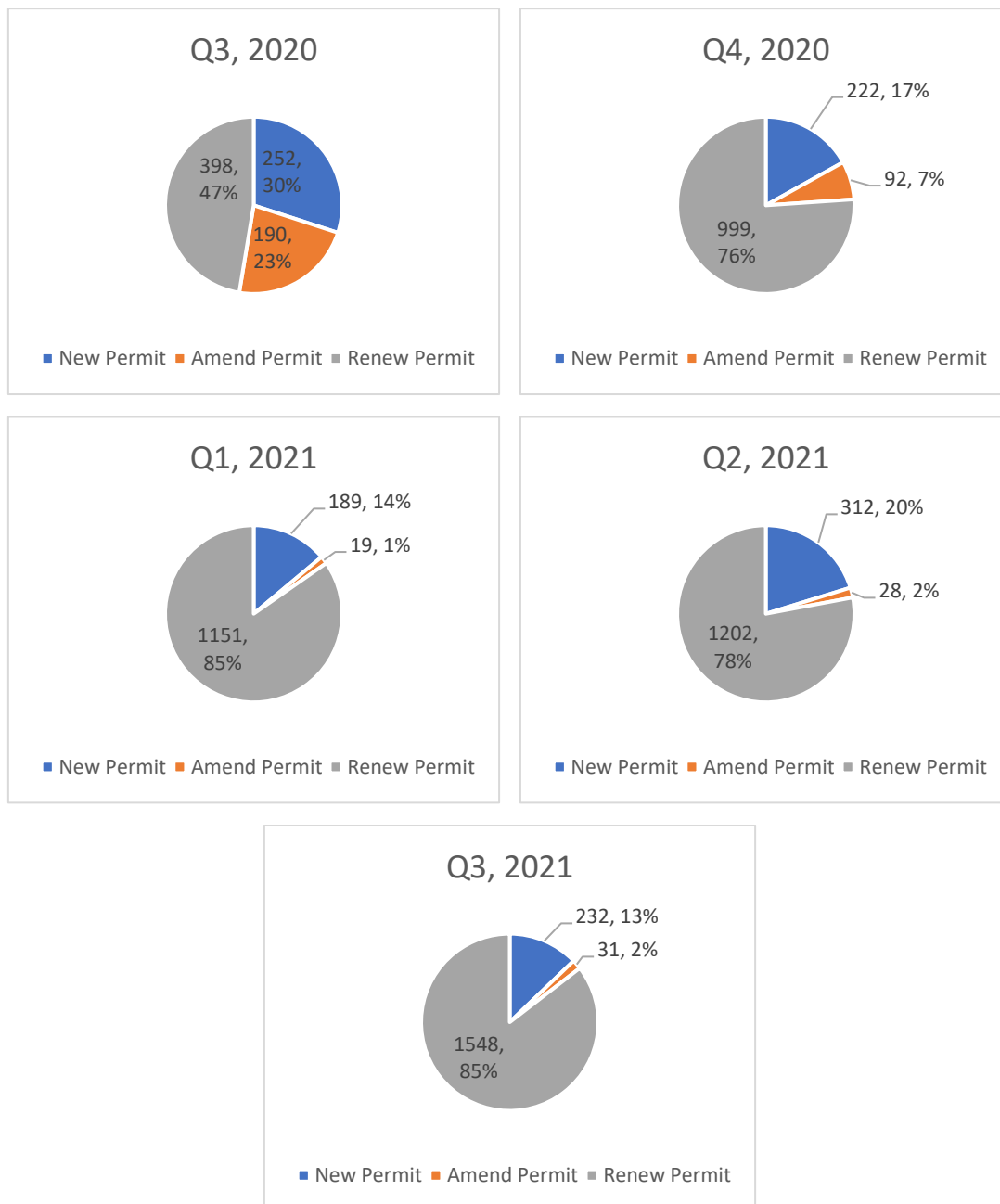


Figure A.2: Single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by application type, quarterly (QLD). Applications are sorted into quarters based on the date that the TMR consent outcome was issued. Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

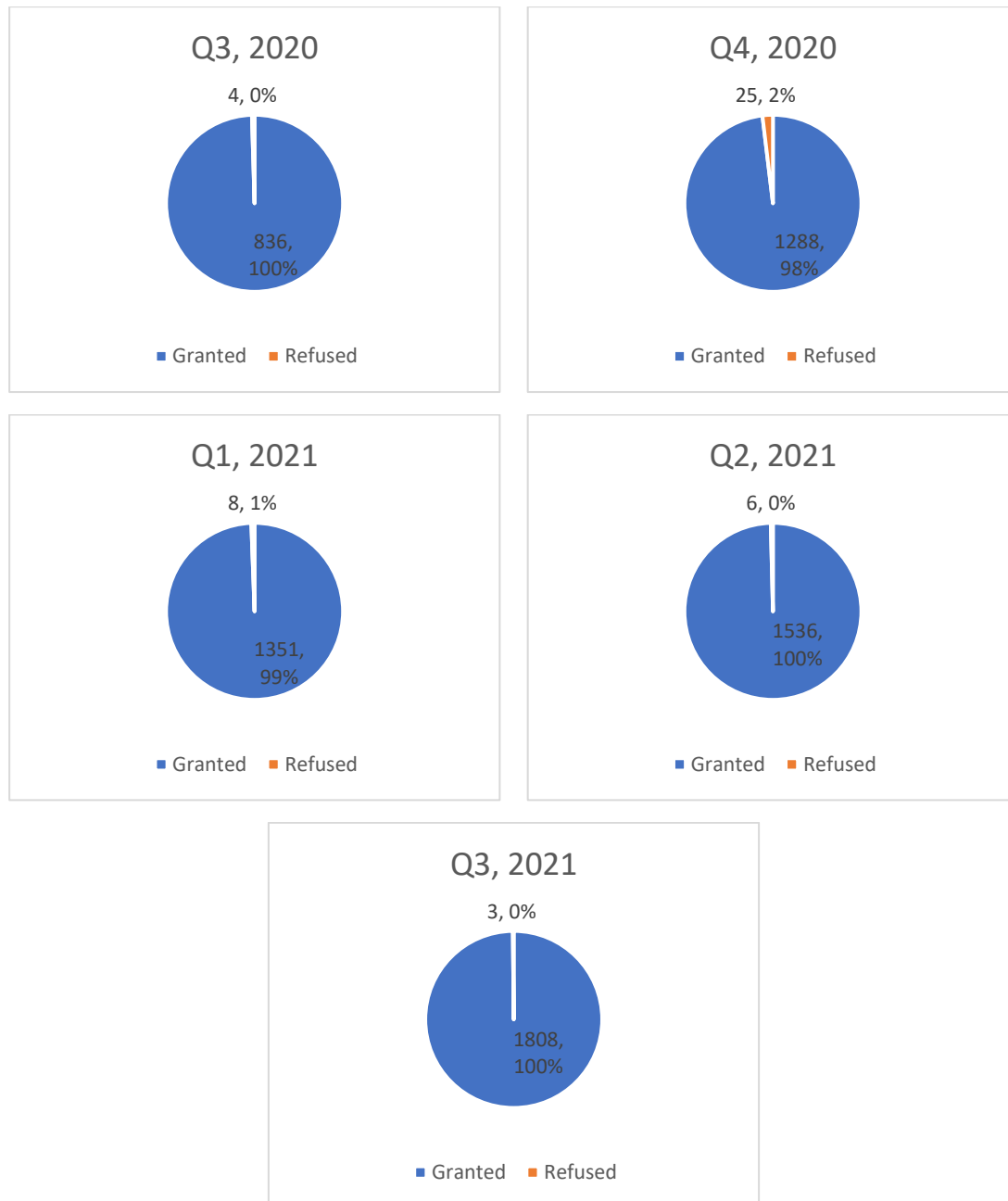


Figure A.3: Single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications by TMR consent outcome (QLD), quarterly. Applications are sorted into quarters based on the date that the TMR consent outcome was issued. Only includes single trip applications for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

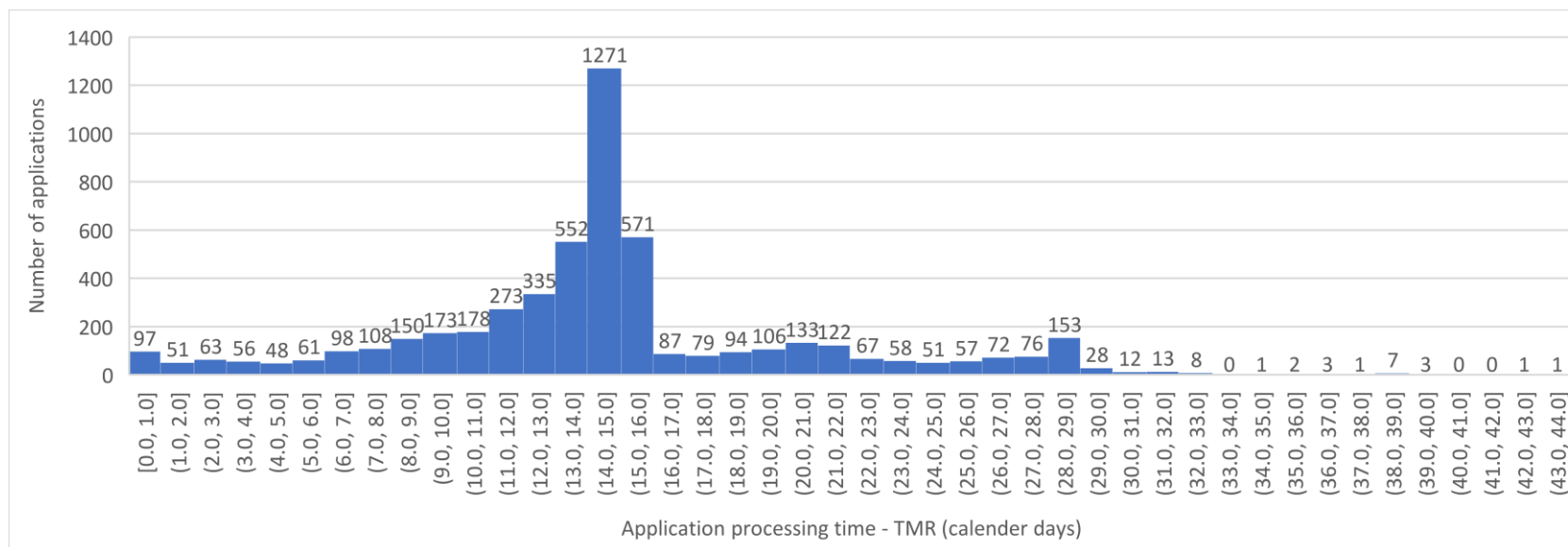


Figure A.4: TMR processing time for single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications – renew permit application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications with renew permit application type for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

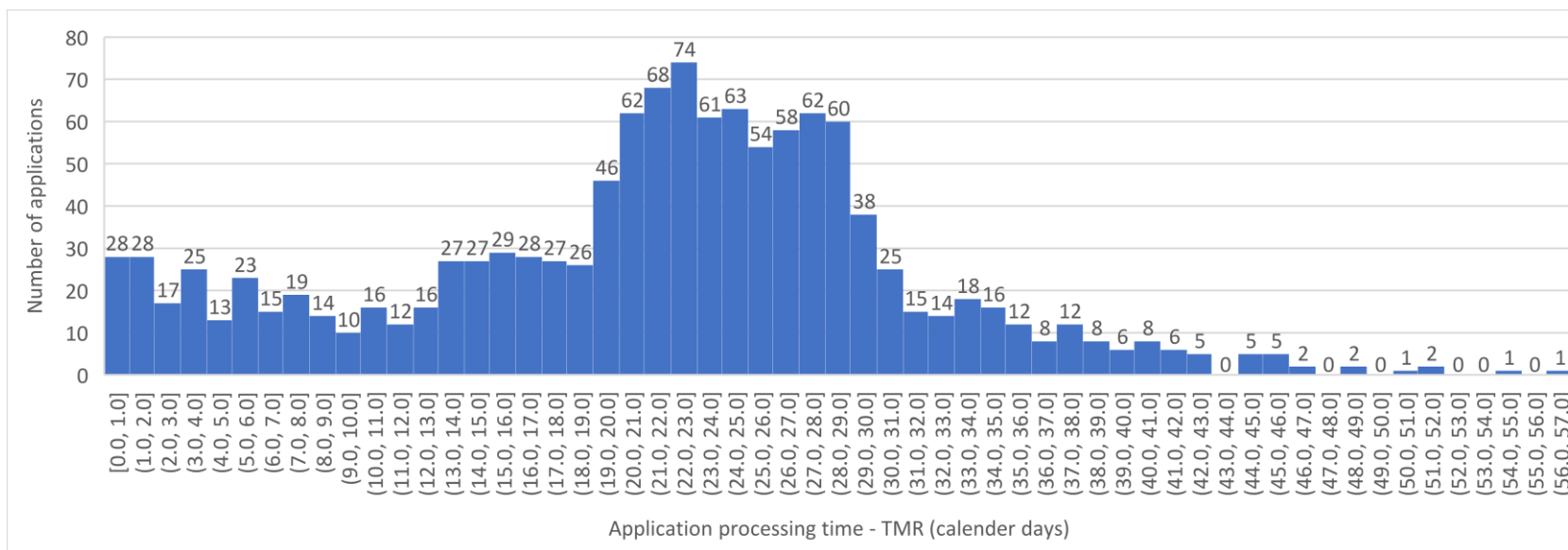


Figure A.5: TMR processing time for single trip mass or dimension exemption permit applications – new permit application type (QLD). Only includes single trip applications with new permit application type for SPV All Terrain Crane and SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly vehicle types submitted in QLD since 1 June 2020 with a TMR consent outcome issued by 30 September 2021. Excludes applications that were granted due to pre-approval or were closed [1].

Appendix B NHVR data contents

The source data used for this report was provided by the NHVR and contained information on all *mass or dimension exemption permit* applications submitted since the respective return of delegations in QLD and NSW up until September 30 (excluding a significant number of the applications currently under assessment).

The data covered the following vehicle types:

- SPV All Terrain Crane
- SPV All Terrain Crane with dolly
- QLD – Class 1 Crane Permit Scheme
- QLD – Class 1 Crane with dolly Permit Scheme

For each permit application, the following information was provided:

- State in which access was requested
- Case revision and version number
- Vehicle type
- Application type ('New Permit', 'Amend Permit', 'Renew Permit')
- Date of application submission
- Date that road manager consent was completed
- Extension of time flag
- Length of time extension (if applicable)
- Duration type ('Single Trip', 'Multiple Trips', 'Period Permit')
- TMR/TfNSW consent status
- Time with road manager (TMR/TfNSW)
- Time with road manager/s (excluding TMR/TfNSW)
- Number of road managers involved in case