

ONLINE ARTICLE

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LEEDS Transport owner John Leeds said he was shocked when he had a visit from heavy haulage telling him he was not legally allowed to drive his truck on the Muceha East Road.

OVER zealous transport inspectors almost caused a significant transport issue on Muceha East Road last week.

Livestock transporters using the road, which runs to the Muceha Livestock Centre, were unexpectedly told last Wednesday that they could expect to be fined should they drive prime movers towing a semi-trailer and B-Double on the road.

Truck drivers were told they were not able to access Muceha East road in a road train longer than 27.5m and which weighed more than 84 tonnes.

Muceha East Road links the Great Northern Highway with the Muceha Livestock Centre and has been constantly used by truck drivers since the opening of the livestock centre two years ago.

One transporter received a caution for driving on the road.

But after a morning of constant phone calls between industry representatives and Main Roads WA, the issue has been resolved but industry people are still not happy.

The confusion seems to have occurred through a breakdown in communication between the Main Roads WA and its Heavy Haulage officers.

At the time, police officers claimed the transporters needed a permit from the Chittering Shire to be able to use the road, which has since been proven to be wrong.

The police officers claimed the road was still under a Restricted Access Vehicles (RAV) category 3, which only allows road trains up to 27.5m and weighing no more than 84t.

What the police officers didn't know was that the road had been upgraded to a RAV category 7 on May 25, 2010.

Under a RAV category 7 road trains are allowed to be up to 36.5m and 107.5t.

Most livestock transporters have a general endorsement from Main Roads WA to access RAV category 7 roads.

Muchea Livestock Centre manager Lyndon Henning said it was a clear lack of communication from Main Roads WA to its inspectors.

"From May 25, 2010, there was a general endorsement from Main Roads WA that Muchea East Road was upgrading to a RAV 7 road, it was a RAV 3, but it does not show on the inspector's network map yet, but I have been assured it will be," Mr Henning said.

"I think it was misinformation from the inspector's part.

"It put a lot of people out for half a day, with people making a lot of phone calls and so on.

"In a world we live in now, time is fairly expensive."

Mr Henning said the heavy vehicle office needed to have a good look at what it was doing and how it was getting the communication out to its inspectors because if it had happened on Monday or Tuesday, after a sale day, it would have been chaos.

A spokesperson for Main Roads WA said the situation had now been resolved.

"A Main Roads senior manager spoke with an affected livestock carrier this week and also communicated the information to him in writing," the spokesperson said.

"The operator indicated that he would relay the information to other concerned operators and Main Roads WA is not aware of any police involvement in this matter."

The spokesperson said Main Roads WA transport inspectors told a number of livestock transporters that local government approval was required to operate on Muchea East Road.

"It seems that this was misunderstood to mean that no road trains were allowed to use Muchea East Road," they said.

"Local Government approval is not required for heavy vehicle access to this road.

"It is an approved RAV Network 7 Road between Great Northern Highway and the Muchea Livestock Centre."

But Livestock and Rural Transport Association (LRTA) president Grant Robins said the issue was far from over.

"While the Chittering Shire has ownership of the road it can enforce whatever it wants," Mr Robins said.

"The State Government needs to take ownership of the Muchea East Road.

"At the moment we are at the mercy of the Chittering Shire.

"Why would the government spend a significant amount of money on the Muchea Livestock Centre and not include ownership of the main access route to that facility?"

"There was also \$800,000 spent on upgrading that road to have it ready for an increase of heavy vehicles going to the saleyards."