

INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF MOBILE TRAILERS THAT DISPLAY SPEED COURTESY SIGNS

INTRODUCTION

Courtesy advisory speed signs are becoming more common throughout Australia. Some are in the form of permanently fixed illuminated signs while others are illuminated signs mounted on transportable trailers. While there appear to be safety advantages in these devices being used to advise drivers of their operating speed, this can be offset if the trailers are poorly located. This interim document provides guidance on where these trailer-mounted devices should be located. A final document will be prepared following feedback on operational experience.

LEGAL ISSUES

Trailer mounted signs that advise, guide, direct or warn traffic on roads are “road signs” under the provisions of the Road Traffic Code 2000 (vide regulation 3) as follows –

“road sign” means a board, plate, screen, road marking, or other device, whether or not illuminated, displaying words, figures, symbols or anything else to direct or warn traffic on, entering or leaving a road;

Further, the Commissioner of Main Roads WA has responsibility for road signs in WA by virtue of the provisions of regulation 297 of the Road Traffic Code 2000 as follows –

297. Power to erect traffic-control signals and road signs

- (1) The Commissioner of Main Roads may erect, establish or display, and may alter or take down any road sign or traffic-control signal.*
- (2) The Commissioner of Main Roads may allow an authorised body to erect, establish, display, alter or take down any particular road sign or traffic control-signal, or road signs or traffic-control signals of a class or type of classes or types, and in the circumstances (if any), specified in the instrument of authorisation.*
- (3) Where an authorised body is causing work to be undertaken or responsible for a survey, that authorised body may erect, establish, display, alter or take down any particular road sign or traffic control-signal, or road signs or traffic-control signals of a class or type of classes or types approved by the Commissioner of Main Roads so as to only apply to one lane, or one direction of, the carriageway to which the work or the survey relates.*
- (4) A person shall not, without the consent of the Commissioner of Main Roads, remove, take down, damage, deface or interfere with any road sign or traffic-control signal.*
- (5) A person shall not erect, establish, place, maintain or display, on a road, anything that —*
 - (a) is a false representation of, or a colourable imitation of, a traffic sign or traffic-control signal;*
 - (b) interferes with the effectiveness of, or of any part of, a traffic sign or traffic-control signal;*
 - (c) prevents an approaching driver from clearly distinguishing the whole, or part, of a traffic sign or traffic-control signal;*
 - (d) distracts a driver’s attention from a traffic sign or traffic-control signal; or*
 - (e) not being a traffic sign, displays a word or direction ordinarily associated with a traffic sign.*

Apart from providing the Commissioner with responsibility for approving trailer mounted road signs, these regulations provide some guidance as to the form of the signs themselves and where they may not be located.

A primary issue of which authorities using these trailers should be aware is the duty of care they have to road users by the placement of these trailers. Trailers located such that they cause a traffic hazard leave the authority at risk of being liable for any problems caused by the trailer.

Limitation on Trailer Display

The information displayed on a trailer must not replicate or resemble a traffic sign. This is because traffic laws require traffic signs, which include speed limit signs, to be obeyed by road users. Hence a speed limit sign (or one that resembles a sign) mounted on a trailer would require obedience by drivers. This could have inadvertent and inappropriate consequences. Typical speed limit signs are as follows –



(illuminated)

Note numerals may be different

DEPLOYMENT OF TRAILERS

Where trailers should be located

- They must be placed at safe locations that do not present an accident risk to road users. Suitable locations generally include the following features:
 - where minimum approach site distance is available for the operating speed of traffic. (This is usually based on the 85th percentile speed);
 - where there is clear space between the trailer and through traffic on the carriageway. In built-up areas the edge of the trailer should be at least 300mm (desirably 450mm) from the carriageway. In rural areas the trailer should be at least 2m from the edge of the nearest through traffic lane and not closer than 600mm to the shoulder of the road;
 - a suitable distance from signalised intersections, interchanges and other major intersections. [Generally, a distance of 200m would be appropriate on Primary distributor roads, while on local roads a minimum distance of 100m is desirable];
 - on straight sections of road;
 - where the view of the trailer by drivers is not obscured by any signs, other road-side furniture, trees or development;
 - where drivers have sufficient time to read the message;
 - where the trailer does not obstruct the passage of vehicles or users of paths; and
 - where guard rail or other safety barriers are installed, the trailer should be located behind the rail or barrier, not near their ends.
- For safety reasons, trailers should not be located on any form of path (footpaths, shared path, separated footpath or bicycle path) or on medians with mountable kerbs.
- Trailers must not restrict access for pedestrians. Particular attention should be given to sight impaired pedestrian needs and those with mobility difficulties. If there is no path for pedestrians and bicyclists to use, a 1.5m minimum (1.8m desirable) clear space must be available between the trailer and fence or other barrier, for them to pass.
- Trailers on nature strips should be positioned with the hitch of the trailer pointed towards the direction that traffic travels on the adjacent carriageway.
- Trailers should not generally be located within 200m of a speed zone change on a primary distributor road or a district distributor A or B road in the Perth Metropolitan Functional Road Hierarchy classifications. An exception to this is where special speed zones such as school zones exist or where temporary roadworks speed

zones are installed conforming to Main Roads guidelines on "Traffic Management Requirements for Works on Roads".

- If a trailer is to be left at night it must be located where street lights make it clearly visible to all road users

Circumstances when they should not be used

- These special advisory speed trailers should not be used during peak traffic periods on roads in urban areas that have primary or district distributors A or B classifications. In the Perth Metropolitan area this generally applies between 7.00am and 9.00am and 4.00pm to 6.30pm Monday to Friday. Users should consult Main Roads WA about appropriate times for various roads. In country areas, apart from several important roads in major towns, peak traffic periods are less congested than in Perth. Consequently, use of trailers on major roads in the majority of rural towns is unlikely to cause safety problems.
- These trailers are not to be used on roads that are the responsibility of the Commissioner of Main Roads under the provisions of the Main Roads Act 1930 without the written permission of the relevant Regional Manager in rural areas, or the Manager Traffic and Safety in the Perth Metropolitan area.
- They should not generally be used on roads carrying heavy traffic flows such as freeways or on roads where traffic is slow moving (such as traffic queues when holidaymakers are returning home). This is because they represent a distraction for drivers that in heavy traffic flows could be hazardous.

Advice to Operators

To assist operators understanding how trailers should be safely located, operators should desirably attain an Advanced Worksite Traffic Management Certificate. Refer to the following Main Roads WA website and go to *Traffic* then *Roadworks* then *Administration*. <http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au/NR/mrwa/run/start.asp>

Operators should also ensure that speed detection equipment is correctly calibrated in accordance with manufactures' specifications.

Variation to guidelines

These interim guidelines may be suspended or varied for specific purposes or situations, at any time, by the Executive Director Road Network Services. Where an operator has concerns about a particular circumstance not adequately covered by this guideline contact should be made with the Road Safety Manager Main Roads WA.

Feedback

Feedback on the appropriateness of these guidelines from operators would be appreciated and should be sent to Road Safety Manager Main Roads WA.

AUTHORISATION

As the Executive Director Road Network Services, I authorise the issue and use of this interim Guideline on behalf of the Commissioner of Main Roads.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROAD NETWORK SERVICES

Date: April 2003