

# TAC Local Government Grant Program



## Variable Message Sign Deployment and Messaging Guidelines

June 2023



# Introduction

Variable Message Signs (VMS) provide an opportunity to address key road safety issues and promote safe road user behaviour.

These guidelines have been developed to support LGAs with the safe and effective deployment of VMS. LGAs funded a VMS through the TAC Local Government Grant Program will need to follow these guidelines, in addition to any [VicRoads requirements](#).

Messages, developed by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) cover a range of road safety areas and driver behaviours, and align with TAC public education messaging.

It is recommended that LGAs refer to these messages to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach across the state.





# Messages

- In general, messages should be short and clear. This becomes even more important in higher speed zones where drivers have limited reading time.
- For optimal visibility, aim for messages consisting of eight characters per line and no more than three lines per screen. The maximum characters count should not exceed 10. If longer messages are required, rotating screens can be used to display the content effectively.
- Contextually relevant messaging helps link high-risk locations with the desired behaviour, and justifies the behaviour change request to drivers. This approach should be applied to other identified risk areas too, such as bend or blind spots.

## Speed messages

If the message involves feedback on a driver's speed, typically used in lower-speed urban environments like school zones, the VMS should be configured to display speeds only up to 7–10 km/h over the limit. At this point, a simple message such as "TOO FAST" should be displayed. This approach discourages attempts to set records or engage in excessive speeding.

Try to position the VMS in close proximity to a permanent speed limit sign to emphasise any incidents of speeding. It is not recommended to use speed feedback modes in higher speed zones (80 km/h and above) as there's not enough time to adequately alert drivers. Applicants should refer to VicRoads VMS requirements when positioning VMS near permanent speed limit signs.

# Deployment



## Safe placement

- Proper placement of VMS is essential to avoid any potential hazards to vehicles that might run off the road. As such, VMS should never be placed on the beginning or end of a curve where there is heightened risk of a run-off-road crash.
- The specific placement requirements set by VicRoads vary depending on the speed zone. For example, on rural roads with a speed limit of 100km/h, the recommended distance from the road edge line is 9m.
- When selecting a location for VMS placement, allow for safe and efficient installation and removal. Take into account factors such as visibility and reaction time for oncoming traffic, avoiding placing the sign too close after a visual obstruction or a sharp bend. This way, slow-moving delivery or pickup vehicles can be accommodated without compromising the safety of other road users.
- Ensure the VMS is not positioned in a way that could divert driver attention from potential road hazards. For instance, avoid placing it directly across from driveways or bridges where drivers need to be particularly attentive.



## Site selection

- VMS can effectively reduce average vehicle speeds to the established limit. As such, applicants should prioritise placement in areas with a documented history of speeding. Local police are a valuable resource in identifying such sites.
- Generally, it is recommended to choose sites where the VMS can be seen from a good distance away. The display is quite bright (especially at night), so it's important to avoid inconveniencing local residents wherever possible.

## Rotation

- The impact of VMS messaging on local drivers may wear off over time. As such, it is advisable to select at least three to four sites and rotate the VMS through these locations on a two-week schedule. Please note, this recommendation is separate from placing the VMS at specific events or circumstances, such as road works or festivals, where there is an increased risk to road users for defined periods of time.
- Police enforcement can give added effect to VMS, where the message is appropriate. Connecting with local Victoria Police representatives to discuss opportunities to support local enforcement efforts is encouraged.

# Drink Driving



**DRINKING  
TONIGHT?**

**PLAN  
AHEAD**

**DRINK  
DRIVING**

**DON'T  
RISK  
IT**

**DRINKING  
TONIGHT?**

**LEAVE  
THE CAR  
AT HOME**

**DRINKING.  
DRIVING.**

**THEY'RE  
BETTER  
APART**

**DRINKING  
TONIGHT?**

**PLAN  
YOUR TRIP  
HOME**

**DRINKING  
TONIGHT?**

**DESIGNATE  
A DRIVER  
NOW**

# Speeding



OBEY  
SPEED  
LIMIT

XX KM/H

OBEY  
SPEED  
LIMIT

DON'T PUT  
OTHERS  
AT RISK

SLOW  
DOWN

OBEY  
SPEED LIMIT  
XX KM/H

SPEED  
LIMIT  
XX KM/H

HOW FAST  
ARE YOU  
GOING?

HIGH  
RISK  
AREA

OBEY  
SPEED  
LIMIT

OBEY  
THE SPEED  
LIMIT

SLOW  
DOWN

# Seatbelts



**SEATBELTS  
SAVE  
LIVES**

**ALWAYS  
WEAR YOUR  
SEATBELT**

**ALWAYS  
WEAR YOUR  
SEATBELT**

**CAMERAS  
NOW  
ENFORCING**

**NO  
SEATBELT?**

**THERE'S  
NO  
EXCUSE**

**BUCKLE  
UP**

**IT COULD  
SAVE YOUR  
LIFE**



# Distracted Driving



**ON  
YOUR  
PHONE?**

**FINES  
APPLY**

**DON'T  
TEXT AND  
DRIVE**

**HEAVY  
FINES  
APPLY**

**ON  
YOUR  
PHONE?**

**GET  
OFF THE  
ROAD**

**ON  
YOUR  
PHONE?**

**YOU'RE  
DRIVING  
BLIND**

**TEXT  
MESSAGES  
CAN WAIT**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY AT  
ALL TIMES**

**EYES  
ON THE  
ROAD**

**EYES  
OFF YOUR  
PHONE**



**YOUR  
PHONE  
CAN WAIT**

**DON'T  
PUT OTHERS  
AT RISK**

**STAY  
OFF YOUR  
PHONE**

**CAMERAS  
NOW  
ENFORCING**

**YOUR  
PHONE  
CAN WAIT**

**DON'T BE  
TEMPTED  
BY IT**

**CHECK  
PHONE  
LATER**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY  
NOW**

# Enforcement



**HIGH  
RISK  
AREA**

**POLICE  
ENFORCING**

**POLICE  
BREATH  
TESTING**

**CATCHING  
DRINK  
DRIVERS**

**POLICE  
OUT  
ENFORCING**

**WATCH  
YOUR  
SPEED**

**POLICE  
ENFORCING  
PHONE USE**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY**

**POLICE  
ENFORCING**

**OBEY  
SPEED  
LIMITS**

**POLICE  
ENFORCING  
SPEED**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY**

# Holiday Messaging



**AVOID  
HOLIDAY  
TRAGEDY**

**REST  
EVERY  
2 HOURS**

**POLICE  
ENFORCING  
THIS [XMAS ETC]**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY**

**HAVE A  
SAFE  
HOLIDAY**

**REST  
STOP  
AHEAD**

**AVOID  
HOLIDAY  
TRAGEDY**

**DRIVE  
SAFELY  
THIS [XMAS ETC]**

# Drowsy Driving



**FEELING  
DROWSY?**

**SWAP  
DRIVERS  
EVERY 2HRS**

**DRIVING  
DROWSY?**

**IT'S A  
SILENT  
KILLER**

**YOU CAN'T  
FIGHT  
SLEEP**

**REST  
STOP  
AHEAD**

**DRIVING  
DROWSY?**

**STOP  
FOR A  
POWERNAP**

**REST  
STOP  
AHEAD**

**REST  
AND  
RECHARGE**

**DON'T  
DRIVE  
DROWSY**

**REST  
STOP  
AHEAD**



Further information on the [TAC Local Government Grant Program website](#).

If you would like to speak with someone from the TAC Road Safety Team, please email [lgagrants@tac.vic.gov.au](mailto:lgagrants@tac.vic.gov.au).