

TAC Local Government Grant Program

Variable Message Sign Deployment and Messaging
Guidelines

May 2025

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 near 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. Consider 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**

**DRINKING
TONIGHT?**

**LEAVE
THE CAR
AT HOME**

**DRINKING
TONIGHT?**

**PLAN
YOUR TRIP
HOME**

**DRINK
DRIVING**

**DON'T
RISK
IT**

**DRINKING.
DRIVING.**

**THEY'RE
BETTER
APART**

**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**

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]**

**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 Grants Team, please email [lgagrants@tac.vic.gov.au.](mailto:lgagrants@tac.vic.gov.au)