

State-wide review of speed signage at roadwork sites

Implementation of recommendations

July 2011

The purpose of the state-wide review of speed signage at roadwork sites is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, compliance and consistency in the determination and placement of reduced speed zones at roadwork sites.

Background

In September 2009, the Workplace Rights Ombudsman, released the report into the Contract Traffic Control Industry in Queensland.

The report highlighted a number of concerns including a culture among Queensland motorists of ignoring reduced speed zones through roadwork sites.

In February 2010, the Minister for Main Roads and the Director-General for Transport and Main Roads requested a review of the current arrangements surrounding the use of speed signage at roadwork sites.

The review was initiated by concerns that road users are becoming frustrated by speed limits at roadwork sites that seem too low at times and when there appears to be no apparent need for the lower limits. If the travelling public lose confidence in the integrity of the speed signage, there may be a tendency to ignore the speed limits. This behaviour has the potential to substantially increase safety risks for roadworkers and for road users.

Summary of review findings

The review's recommendations were endorsed in August 2010 and are summarised as follows:

- There is a need to improve the credibility of roadwork signage and reduced speed zones at roadwork sites.
- The design of traffic management plans must minimise the use and length of reduced speed zones to those required by compliance with the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Part 3*.
- Assessments and strategies should be adopted to reduce the potential negative impact of roadworks on road users.
- Adopting the recommended principles has the potential to improve driver confidence in roadwork signage and as a result improve driver behaviour at roadwork sites.

- Adopting a conservative position in setting lower speed limits does not always equate to increased roadworker safety or reduce the risk of litigation.

Key strengths

While the review identified areas for improvement, it also highlighted valuable key strengths that the Department of Transport and Main Roads has in place which provide a solid platform for continued improvement, including:

- The MUTCD is widely perceived as an excellent publication. It is updated on a regular basis to address perceived issues and to maintain compliance where appropriate with Australian Standards (AS1742.3).
- In recent years, there has been a heightened focus on roadworker safety across the industry and increased awareness among motorists due to media attention and government-initiated road safety campaigns.
- Inspections at individual roadwork sites revealed that generally the correct speed signs were displayed.

Improvement initiatives underway

There is a high level of industry commitment across key sectors to continually improve and maintain high standards of roadwork speed signage. The department is working with industry and has a number of initiatives already in place, including:

- Increasing industry awareness of its responsibilities for ensuring roadworker safety following the introduction of the Code of Practice for Traffic Management for Construction or Maintenance Work in 2008, and the delivery of the Workplace Rights Ombudsman's report in 2009.
- Introduction of a Traffic Management Registration Scheme which has seen a large take up within the industry across all regions. The scheme is designed to positively impact industry capability, industry training levels, and roadwork quality and safety compliance standards.

- A range of other initiatives are currently being implemented by the department in consultation with industry and other stakeholders to improve road safety awareness and industry compliance, including:
 - refinements in the MUTCD and the Traffic Controller Accreditation Scheme Approved Procedure and scheme standards
 - improved traffic management training for roadwork supervisors and for traffic controllers and their supervisors.

Review of implementation activities

The department's review team has identified a number of key activities to support the implementation of review recommendations, including:

- Ongoing department and industry consultation to generate increased awareness around the review's recommendations and issues.
- Developing feedback processes for industry members, road users and department staff to report good or poor examples of signage at roadwork sites.
- Continued department and Queensland Police Service collaboration around early engagement, enforcement and the use of Queensland Police Service staff on certain projects.
- Improved traffic management training relevant to operational needs and to address current issues and challenges.
- Continued research and development of electronic speed signage to reduce the exposure of workers.
- The use of standard contractual incentives to encourage consideration of the impact that roadworks has on the road user.

Implementation timeframes

The review team delivered its findings in August 2010.

The implementation of recommendations from the review and further improvement steps is already underway.

The department's review team will continue its consultation with industry on the implementation of improvement activities throughout 2011 and beyond.

Who does this review affect?

- All traffic management companies operating in Queensland.
- All road construction companies, other industries or organisations that conduct traffic control.
- Transport and Main Roads staff and contractors.
- All road users.

Key points for industry members

- Roadwork signage must be in accordance with the endorsed traffic guidance scheme, and installed and maintained to the required standards.
- Ensure reduced speed zones are kept to minimum lengths. This requires 'end roadworks' and gazetted speed signs to be in place as close to the end of the works as practicable.
- If a speed zone is in place for roadworker safety, then there must be roadworkers present.
- If the speed zone is in place for road user safety through changes to the road environment, then the danger must be evident or made evident to the road user.
- The Principal Contractor retains ultimate responsibility for traffic control and management, requiring them to ensure the guidance system is adequately designed, installed correctly, and regularly reviewed on site.

More information

The department welcomes industry member feedback and suggestions in relation to the review and various improvement activities.

Please direct enquires or feedback to:

Craig Gardner
 Inspection Services Coordinator
 Assets and Operations Division
craig.j.gardner@tmr.qld.gov.au