This document provides instructions for the use of portable variable message signs (VMS) on the NSW State Road network to ensure the health and safety of workers and all road users in accordance with relevant legislation, standards and guidelines. A portable VMS must not be deployed on the NSW State Road network unless it meets the requirements of this document.

Portable VMS are typically trailer-mounted, with the functionality of remotely controlling the displayed messages. All portable VMS used on the Transport for NSW (Transport) managed network must comply with the requirements of AS 4852.2 *Variable message signs*, Part 2: *Portable signs.*

When planning to use a portable VMS within a road related area, careful consideration must be given to the proposed location of the VMS and the message it displays. The sign must meet its intended purpose while ensuring that the amenity and safety needs of all road users are considered and accommodated.

Portable VMS must only be used on a road related area where they are necessary to provide traffic management related messages for road works, incidents, special events or changed traffic conditions including speed limit changes. They may also be used for other purposes such as displaying road safety messages for specific campaigns or government/community announcements (e.g. total fire bans).

Portable VMS placed on a road related area are intended to attract the attention of road users, however, a distracted driver has the potential to create a road safety risk. Therefore the selection, placement, location and display of a VMS must not create a road safety hazard or otherwise generally increase the road safety risk for road users.

As such, a site specific risk assessment must be undertaken which considers the portable VMS deployment, use and removal. The risk assessment must also include identification, assessment and management of risks associated with the proposed location such as proximity to traffic, overhead electricity lines, culverts, medians or steep embankments. Consideration must also be given to ensure that no other site safety risks are introduced to any road users during the installation, operation, and removal of the portable VMS.

The use of a portable VMS should also be considered as part of a traffic management plan (TMP) and included on any associated traffic guidance scheme (TGS). If completed, the TMP must document that all traffic and transport impacts associated with the proposed VMS have been properly identified, assessed and managed in order to minimise disruption to the road transport network and its users. TMPs and TGSs should be reviewed and accepted by the relevant road authority.

Table 1 below provides the considerations and performance criteria that must be addressed when determining the placement and operation of a portable VMS within a road related area.

Table 1 VMS performance criteria

Considerations	Performance Criteria
Is the portable VMS required?	The benefits of using a portable VMS must outweigh the risks it might introduce or the costs of implementing. Consideration should be given to the use of other communication mediums, such as the internet or social media, which might achieve the same outcome.
Purpose of the portable VMS	If the portable VMS is being used for special events, the NSW Government *Guide to Traffic and Transport Management for Special Events* must be consulted and applied where applicable. If the portable VMS is being used for temporary traffic management (road works) for or on behalf of Transport, the portable VMS usage requirements of the *Traffic control at work sites Technical Manual* (TCAWS) must be consulted and applied. For roads managed by local councils, consultation must be undertaken with the relevant council for their requirements of the placement and operation of portable VMS. In the absence of any specific guidance, TCAWS or AS 1742.3 *Manual of uniform traffic control devices*, Part 3: *Traffic control for works on roads* should be consulted.
Message content	The messages displayed on a VMS must be written such that they are easily read and quickly comprehended. The content of new and revised messages must be approved in accordance with standard procedures for each road authority. Transport's standard procedure is the Austroads *Guide to Traffic Management* (AGTM) Part 10: *Traffic Control and Communication Devices* and the associated Transport Supplement.
Portable VMS location along roadway	The portable VMS must only be placed along a road where there is adequate time for the driver to view and comprehend the message before a decision point, other VMS or a large sign. Decision points are intersections, merge points, exit ramps, traffic control signals, pedestrian crossings or sharp curves. Minimum distances from a portable VMS to a decision point, other VMS or large signs, must be in accordance with Table 2. Table 2 Minimum distance of portable VMS from decision points <table><tr><th>Speed limit (km/h)</th><th>Minimum distance from decision point or other VMS/large sign (m)</th></tr><tr><td>40</td><td>65</td></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>90</td></tr><tr><td>60</td><td>115</td></tr><tr><td>70</td><td>140</td></tr><tr><td>80</td><td>170</td></tr><tr><td>90</td><td>200</td></tr><tr><td>100</td><td>235</td></tr></table> If the distances specified above cannot be achieved or result in an ineffective location, a risk based approach must be taken to determine the safest possible location for all road users. This assessment must be documented in the risk assessment and TMP if completed. The Austroads *Guide to Traffic Management* (AGTM) Part 10: *Traffic Control and Communication Devices* and the associated Transport Supplement should be consulted for advice on placement of portable VMS.

Considerations	Performance Criteria
Offset from edge of traffic lane	The portable VMS must be placed behind a Transport approved safety barrier or be positioned as far away from the edge of the traffic lane as is practical in a position determined suitable based on a documented risk assessment and where applicable, documented in the TMP. For more information refer to Austroads *Guide to Road Design* Part 6: *Roadside Design, Safety and Barriers*.
Cyclists & pedestrians	The portable VMS must be located to provide for the safe movement of cyclists and pedestrians. Portable VMS should not be placed on a footpath or footway. However in environments when this is unavoidable a safe alternative route must be provided for these road users. Portable VMS must not be placed where they will restrict safe stopping sight distance to pedestrians at crossing points (e.g. refuges, pedestrian crossings or signalised intersections). The placement of a portable VMS must also consider the needs of vulnerable pedestrians, such as mobility and vision impaired pedestrians and children.

The information in this document is subject to updates, and so interested parties should check for the latest version on the Transport website.