

AS 1742.4:2020



STANDARDS  
Australia



# Manual of uniform traffic control devices

## Part 4: Speed controls

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AS 1742.4:2020

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Australian Automobile Association  
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
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# Manual of uniform traffic control devices

## Part 4: Speed controls

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## Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee MS-012, Road Signs and Traffic Signals, to supersede AS 1742.4—2008.

The objective of this Standard is to provide road authorities throughout Australia with a set of uniform requirements and traffic control devices for the regulatory control of traffic speeds.

It is one in a series of 14 Standards which together form the Manual of uniform traffic control devices. The series comprises the following Standards:

AS 1742.1, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 1: General introduction and index of signs*

AS 1742.2, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 2: Traffic control devices for general use*

AS 1742.3, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 3: Traffic control devices for works areas*

AS 1742.4, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 4: Speed controls (this Standard)*

AS 1742.5, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 5: Street name and community locality name signs*

AS 1742.6, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 6: Tourist and services signs*

AS 1742.7, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 7: Railway crossings*

AS 1742.9, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 9: Bicycle facilities*

AS 1742.10, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 10: Pedestrian control and protection*

AS 1742.11, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 11: Parking controls*

AS 1742.12, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 12: Bus, transit, tram and truck lanes*

AS 1742.13, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 13: Local area traffic management*

AS 1742.14, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 14: Traffic signals*

AS 1742.15, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 15: Direction signs information signs and route numbering*

Principal variations from the 2008 edition are as follows:

- (a) Guidance on how speed limits should be set has been removed. Refer to the relevant Austroads guides.
- (b) The term “Speed Restriction” is replaced by “Speed Limit”.
- (c) “Speed Limit Buffer” signing has been removed. The “Speed Limit AHEAD” sign replaces the speed limit buffer.
- (d) Addition of an “ON RAMP” (R9-17) supplementary plate.
- (e) Addition of supplementary “END Speed Limit AREA Midblock” (R4-13) sign.
- (f) Addition of a “Speed Limit AREA Reminder” (R4-17) sign.
- (g) Addition of an example supplementary variable speed limit “VSL” sign.
- (h) Addition of “Class of vehicle” signing (or supplementary plate) examples.

The relationship between Australian Standards and publications produced by Austroads should be noted. The former provides specifications and procedures that ensure that products and services are safe and reliable, and consistently perform the way they are intended. Austroads provides guidance

documents that deal with the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the road network. Austroads documents are also used by road authorities in New Zealand.

In cases of similar subject matter, this is dealt with across both sets of documents. Where this occurs, each document aims to provide information that is consistent, complimentary and supportive of the other.

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## Introduction

The purpose of speed limits is to assist with the safe and orderly movement of traffic and the interactions of motorized vehicles with each other and other road users. This involves consideration of safety, mobility and amenity.

The involvement of speed related factors in road crashes is well established and generally it is well understood by the community. There is also an understanding that speed limits impact on the amenity of users of abutting property (including their vehicular access) as well as generally impacting on levels of mobility.

Experience and research have demonstrated that arbitrarily imposed speed limits that are too low for the particular road, traffic and roadside environments on a section of road attract poor levels of compliance, regardless of the level of enforcement. Ideally, limits are set such that road users can readily understand the reasons for setting them at a particular level. This gives the limits credibility, so it is more likely they will be voluntarily observed by the majority of motorists. The literature on this topic includes examples where unreasonably low speed limits have been increased and travel speeds have reduced: a speed limit needs to have a sound basis in order for travel speeds to align with it. This is more so now, with increased levels of police enforcement, including the extensive use of automated methods of infringement detection.

The setting of effective speed limits will usually be based on a road's basic function, traffic activity and layout and roadside development and activity. Road geometry and condition, and crash risk are also factors for consideration. However, it should not be assumed that the provision of a lower speed limit will address all perceived road safety issues. Beyond general principles, more detailed advice on such matters is no longer contained in this Standard; readers are referred to jurisdictional supplements and the Austroads publications: *Guide to Road Safety Part 2: Speed Limits and Speed Management*, and *Guide to Traffic Management Part 5: Link Management*.

In the absence of signs to the contrary, the general urban speed limit is 50 km/h and the general rural speed limit is 100 km/h (except for variations in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania). Depending on the environment, speed limits are signed at 10 km/h increments between 10 km/h (in shared zones) and 110 km/h (except for a variation in the Northern Territory) on higher standard rural roads and expressway type roads. This Standard sets out the signing arrangements and other associated features available for speed limits to comply with the requirements of the Australian Road Rules.

NOTES

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# Australian Standard®

## Manual of uniform traffic control devices

### Part 4: Speed controls

#### Section 1 Scope and general

##### 1.1 Scope

This Standard specifies the traffic control devices to be used for the regulatory control of traffic speed. The Standard does not cover temporary speed limits or the use of advisory speed signs.

NOTE Speed matters excluded from this Standard are covered in the following references:

- (a) Temporary speed limits at works on roads — AS 1742.3.
- (b) Determination of advisory speeds and the use of supplementary plates — AS 1742.2.
- (c) Unsigned limits applied by existing legislation to classes of vehicle or driver, e.g. National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and jurisdiction regulations and guidelines.

##### 1.2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document:

NOTE Documents for informative purposes are listed in the Bibliography.

AS 1348, *Roads and traffic engineering — Glossary of terms*

AS 1742.2, *Manual of uniform traffic control devices, Part 2: Traffic control devices for general use*

AS 1743, *Road signs—Specifications*

AS 4049.5, *Paints and related materials — Pavement marking materials, Part 5: Performance assessment of pavement markings*

AS 5156, *Electronic speed limit signs*

##### 1.3 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this Standard the definitions in AS 1348 and those below apply.

###### 1.3.1

###### **expressway type road**

divided highway for through traffic with full or partial control of access and generally with grade separation at intersections

Note to entry: The term includes expressways, freeways, tollways and motorways.

###### 1.3.2

###### **local area**

area containing only local and collector roads which is bounded by arterial and sub-arterial roads or features such as rivers, railway lines or the limit of urban development

###### 1.3.3

###### **local street**

road or street that serves primarily to provide access within a locality