

POSITION STATEMENT

# TOURIST SIGNAGE GUIDELINES



## ► WHY HAVE GUIDELINES

There has long been a recognised need to improve the quality and effectiveness of **TOURIST ATTRACTION** and **TOURIST SERVICE FACILITY** signs throughout Western Australia.

	<b>Directional signs to Tourist Attractions have white lettering and symbols on a BROWN background</b>
	<b>Directional signs to Tourist Services and Facilities have white lettering or symbols on a BLUE background</b>

The diversity of attitudes towards signs and the responsibility for determining signage policies and the provision of signs intended to assist the visitor, have led to a confusing and inconsistent 'clutter' of sign styles and designs. Consequently, in many parts of the State, signs are of limited assistance to the visitor.

These guidelines, for the provision of signposting to recognised tourist attractions and visitor service facilities throughout the State, have been developed to:

- provide a better understanding of existing signage policies and standards,
- identify who is responsible for provision and maintenance of signage, and
- determine what is necessary to meet the needs of visitors.

The guidelines are also designed to:

- Assist those who are interested in safely directing the road users' attention to tourist attractions or service facilities;
- Attempt to limit the size, clutter and inefficiency of uncontrolled and inappropriate signs, which create aesthetic and safety problems, whilst encouraging more effective signs through the adoption of a uniform approach to signage throughout the State;
- Recognise and support the established signage policies and requirements of Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA), as well as those of Local Government Authorities that promote a uniform state-wide and national approach to signage standards.

## ► OBJECTIVES

Tourism Western Australia's (Tourism WA) objectives in preparing these signage guidelines are:

- to encourage the provision of an efficient information system, designed as a 'family' of co-ordinated and complementary signs throughout the State, which meet the requirements of tourism operators and the travelling public
- to encourage a uniform and consistent approach to the design, construction and erection of signs throughout the State, with a view to eventually eliminating the proliferation of different types of signs, which are becoming increasingly confusing and ineffective to motorists travelling from one area to another.
- to limit the proliferation of road signs to preserve the prime aesthetic values of the landscape and environment.
- to encourage the removal of unauthorised or unnecessary signs which:
  - cannot be read effectively
  - threaten road user safety
  - interfere with the message of legitimate signs
  - clutter the landscape
  - reduce the aesthetic and natural beauty of the State.
- to ensure that, from a road safety point of view, signs incorporate 'glance appreciation' qualities incorporating uniform, elementary shapes and colours, with simple and concise messages using internationally recognised symbols wherever possible.
- 'glance appreciation' means being able to readily interpret the information on a sign with only a momentary 'glance' by the driver at the prevailing road speed.
- to ensure that the fundamental purpose of signposting tourist attractions and service facilities is always maintained. It must be remembered that the main purpose of signs is to **confirm** the location of, and **not** advertise, tourist attractions and services.
- to promote the use of MRWA standards for signs in preference to individual variations and interpretations which are sometimes developed by Local Government Authorities.
- to rationalise and simplify signage standards, to ensure that all businesses operate under the same controls or restrictions concerning tourist attraction and service facility signs.
- to ensure that signs are uniformly used as a means of confirmation for the motorist of tourist attractions and service facilities in a given area.
- to ensure that existing signs are properly maintained and continue to project a positive image of the area.
- To ensure that the **value** of tourist attraction and service signs are not diminished by ensuring that only those attractions and services that meet the essential criteria are signed.

## ► ESTABLISHED STANDARDS AND POLICIES

Tourism WA supports and recommends the adoption of the MRWA signage policy as a Statewide standard to guide and direct the development of tourism and service signage throughout the State in a consistent and uniform manner.

MRWA standards comply with both national and international standards. The signs and associated symbols and colours, therefore, have the advantage of national and international recognition, which benefits local operators and visitors alike and transcends language barriers.

By working within the MRWA policy, and by applying common sense and a flexible approach to individual situations, MRWA and Local Government will be able to properly manage signage to service the best interests of visitors, road users, businesses and community at large.

## ► **KEY POLICY GUIDELINES**

Signs should not be used as the primary means of identification. Good road and tourist maps are always recommended to be used as the primary means of locating tourist attractions and services. Road signs then become a means of affirming their precise location and reassuring motorists that they are travelling in the right direction.

Local Government Authorities and Visitor Information Centres are encouraged to develop and implement a regular and systematic tourist sign inspection programme and to maintain an up-to-date sign inventory for their area.

The following criteria highlight the major directions and initiatives of MRWA policy on the provision of tourist attraction and service facility signing:

### ► ► **RESPONSIBILITY**

MRWA is responsible for the installation of traffic signs throughout the State. In 1975, the authority to approve and install tourist attraction and service signs outside the Perth Metropolitan Area was delegated to local governments. This delegation does not include signs on declared highways and main roads, however local government is also required to approve signs on these roads.

MRWA uses the signing principles set by Standards Australia (SA) when designing and installing tourist attraction and service facility signs. Adoption of these principles ensures signing uniformity throughout Australia.

The licensing of advertising signs is the responsibility of local government. However, the consent of MRWA is also needed for advertising signs on or directed at highways and main roads.

### ► ► **SIGN TYPES**

Directional signs for recognised tourist attractions and service facilities should meet the minimum essential criteria.

#### ► ► ► **Tourist Attraction Signs**

Tourist attraction signs cover such areas as:

- Commercial tourist attractions
- National Parks
- Natural Features
- Wineries that provide tastings and cellar sales (includes Breweries & Distilleries)
- Historic sites and towns
- Aboriginal Heritage
- Scenic Tourist Drives
- Themed Tourist Routes

Tourist attraction signs are only available to establishments recognised as being of significant interest to tourists. Essential criteria has been developed to assess tourist attractions in order to determine whether a tourist attraction sign is recommended.

In order to qualify for tourist attraction or service signage, it is a primary requirement that the core business is based on tourism and has a strong commitment to service visitors. Arts and crafts establishments, nurseries, garden centres, food and produce retail shops and the like are generally not endorsed as a tourist attraction unless they offer a significant value added visitor experience such as having a well known artist in residence, providing demonstrations or tours of premises.

### ►►► **Tourist Service Signs**

Tourist Service signs cover such areas as:

- Accommodation facilities (including Caravan Parks & Camping Facilities)
- Visitor Information Centres
- Tourist Information Radio

There are many other service facilities that are signed for motorists in rural areas that are general motorist facilities and for which there are no assessment criteria. These include fuel, airports, cafes, restaurants, golf courses, parking, rest areas, boat ramps etc. Australian Standard symbols exist for all of these facilities and should be used as required.

Tourism signage can occur in a number of forms:

### ►►► **Advance Warning Signs**

Advance warning signs provide motorists with advance information on the upcoming tourist attraction or service facility. These signs, showing the name of the attraction, are usually required and placed on high speed roads or where advance warning is necessary for road safety reasons (eg: road bends, blind corners etc).

### ►►► **Intersection Signs**

Intersection signs are placed at key road intersections to indicate the actual turn off to tourist attractions or service facilities.

### ►►► **Fingerboard Signs**

Fingerboard signs are placed at minor road intersections to indicate the turn off to tourist attractions or service facilities.

### ►►► **Position Signs**

Position signs are placed at the actual location of the tourist attraction or service facility. These are generally only used when the facility or attraction is not obvious from the roadside.

### ►►► **Route Marker Signs**

Route marker signs are mainly used for State Tourist Drives and Themed Tourist Routes. The signs are generally placed before and after a major intersection and reinforced by route numbering shields at intervals to reassure motorists that they are still travelling along the designated route.

## ►► **COLOUR**

It is strongly recommended that signs comply with MRWA standards, uniform colour coding so that road users can instantly recognise the type of sign and information offered wherever they travel in the State.

For example:

- all tourist service signs must have white lettering and symbols on a blue background

- all tourist attraction signs must have white lettering and symbols on a brown background

## ► ► **WORDING**

Signs should generally display a clear, accurate and succinct message, which is simple and easy to read and comprehend. Signs are most effective when they are well designed and clearly legible, both at a distance and at the prevailing road speed in accordance with the Australian Standard. This way signs become much more consistent and user friendly.

The size of lettering on signs is most important. Having standard lettering sizes (and styles) on all signs minimises the confusion and ultimately provides signs that are consistently easier to read.

## ► ► **SYMBOLS**

Wherever and whenever possible, the use of Australian Standard and other internationally recognised symbols indicating tourist service facilities and tourist attractions is encouraged and recommended. Australian Standard and International symbols are used by all authorities throughout Australia. They are uniform in design and are being adopted universally. They are easily understood at a glance, even by non-English speaking people. This makes signs an effective means of communication for our ever increasing numbers of international visitors.

It is also recommended that distances to tourist attractions or service facilities be included on signs. In many cases, the most important or critical feature of a sign designed to encourage people to visit an attraction or service facility is an indication of the distance required to travel from that point.

## ► ► **SIZE**

The optimum size of a sign is dependent on the motorists' ability to interpret the sign from a distance. It is therefore, important that signs are provided of a size and at intervals compatible with the prevailing road speed.

MRWA standards allow for a number of varying standard sizes for signs, depending upon the sign's location, purpose and speed of approach.

## ► ► **SHAPE**

A sign's shape is also an important component in the overall design. Limiting the range of sign shapes to a small number will provide additional consistency and uniformity, which is ultimately far less confusing to the traveller.

## ► ► **LOCATION**

It is important that signs are located such that they do not interfere with the safety of all road users. Signs should be carefully positioned such that:

- they do not obstruct a driver's view of the road,
- they do not obstruct other traffic or pedestrians,
- they do not form a confusing background to normal regulatory traffic signs and signals, and
- stacking signs is avoided in high use areas.

Where there is a concentration of tourist attractions or service facilities at a particular turn-off, it may be appropriate to provide information bays in strategic locations.

## ► ► **COMPOSITE SIGNS**

Composite signs can sometimes create more problems than solutions. Road safety and sign effectiveness are of prime importance. The use of information bays in strategic locations or visitor information centres should be considered as an alternative in attraction rich areas.

### ►► **NUMBER OF SIGNS PERMISSIBLE FOR A BUSINESS**

Although it is acknowledged that ‘the more signs the better’ argument can greatly increase the viability of local businesses, particularly those catering to the visitor and travelling motorist, it must be remembered that tourist attraction and service signs are provided not for advertising purposes but as a traffic management tool to help visitors get off the main road quickly and safely.

To avoid signage proliferation and to ensure commercial equity, it is recommended that each business be signed only from the nearest major road, and that confirmation signs be positioned only along the major access routes to the business.

Tourist attraction and service operators should then be encouraged to make maximum use of the area’s Visitor Information Centre, roadside information bays and similar outlets to promote the location of their business.

### ►► **CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS**

It is important that signs throughout the State are constructed from similar materials. Some confusion can arise when signs to attractions or services are made of metal in one area and made of routed wood in another area.

Furthermore, poor methods of construction can also cause dangers to road users and pedestrians, particularly if they are low, have sharp edges, or if they are not designed to collapse on impact by a vehicle.

## ► **NATIONAL TOURISM SIGNING REFERENCE GROUP (NTSRG)**

The NTSRG provides a linkage between state and territory tourism organisations and their road authorities in order to facilitate discussion and policy formulation about tourism road signing and related matters. Each state and territory tourism (except for Tourism WA) and road authority is represented on the NTSRG.

### ►► **WHY HAVE A NATIONAL BODY**

Because our visitors do not recognise state and territory borders it is important that there is consistency in major tourism road signing throughout Australia.

While recognising and allowing for local conditions, the NTSRG aims to achieve uniformity on fundamental signing issues.

This is primarily achieved through reviewing and recommending changes to the appropriate Australian Standard, but also at a less formal level through cooperation between the nation’s tourism and road authorities.

### ►► **ROLE OF THE NTSRG**

The work of the NTSRG has to date included:

- Initiating and contributing to the revision of Australian Standard 1742.6, which deals with tourism road signing

- National guidelines for the implementation of tourist routes and themed tourist 'Ways' of national, state and regional significance
- National guidelines for the signing of tourist radio services

Current work being considered by the NTSRG includes:

- An analysis of symbols being used to denote tourist attractions and services throughout Australia
- National signing guidelines for food and wine trails