‘Welcome to Country’ Signage Guidelines
‘Welcome to Country’ Signage Guidelines
Revision 1 / April 2012

© VicRoads 2009

VicRoads produces documents in hard copy and electronic format. This document is an uncontrolled copy. Updates will be made to these Guidelines as required and listed in an amendments page at the front of the controlled electronic version in VicRoads Environmental Management Toolkit.

The information contained in these guidelines is for general information only and is not intended to constitute legal advice. VicRoads accepts no responsibility for any loss arising out of reliance on any information contained in this document.

Acknowledgements

These guidelines were prepared by VicRoads Environmental Sustainability in conjunction with Technical Consulting, Network Asset and Planning, Regional Services and Major Projects.

VicRoads would like to acknowledge the assistance of all who provided comments on these guidelines.
CONTENTS

1 OVERVIEW .............................................................................................................................................................................4
  1.1 Key Stakeholders ............................................................................................................................................................................. 4
  1.2 Standard Design ............................................................................................................................................................................... 4
  1.3 Key Benefits ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 4

2 PROCESS .................................................................................................................................................................................5
  2.1 Step 1: Identify Need for ‘Welcome to Country’ Signage ........................................................................................................ 5
    2.1.1 Potential Sources for Proposals ..................................................................................................................................... 5
    2.1.2 Determine Ability of VicRoads to Provide Specific Recognition to a Group ...........................................................................5
  2.2 Step 2: Determine Signage Location ..................................................................................................................................... 6
    2.2.1 Geographic Location ........................................................................................................................................................... 6
    2.2.2 Position within the Road Reserve ..................................................................................................................................... 6
  2.3 Step 3: Obtain Internal and External Approval of Signage Proposal ......................................................................................... 6
    2.3.1 Internal Approval .................................................................................................................................................................. 6
    2.3.2 External Approval – Department of Justice ..................................................................................................................... 7
  2.4 Step 4: Develop Signage Content and Graphic Design ....................................................................................................... 7
    2.4.1 ‘Welcome to Country’ Signage Standard ............................................................................................................................. 7
    2.4.2 Graphic Design ........................................................................................................................................................................7
    2.4.3 Signage Text ............................................................................................................................................................................8
    2.4.4 Signage Graphic Elements ................................................................................................................................................ 8
  2.5 Step 5: Review Final Signage Proposal ................................................................................................................................... 9
  2.6 Step 6: Production and Installation of Signage ......................................................................................................................... 9
  2.7 Step 7: Maintenance of Signage ............................................................................................................................................... 9
1 OVERVIEW

‘Welcome to Country’ signage is roadside signage indicating that the road user is entering or is in the traditional country of a particular Indigenous group.

The installation of this form of signage is a key recognition initiative, often raised by VicRoads Indigenous stakeholders in the course of both general consultation and project specific agreement negotiations.

1.1 Key Stakeholders

The following stakeholders will be relevant for any ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives:

- Native title claimant or traditional owner groups
- Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria
- Native Title Unit, Department of Justice

1.2 Standard Design

Signs must follow the standard ‘Welcome to Country’ signage format outlined below. This ensures that Welcome to Country signage is consistent across Victoria.

1.3 Key Benefits

In addition to meeting a key recognition aspiration for VicRoads’ Indigenous stakeholders, the installation of this form of signage also has the additional benefit of providing information to the broader community on the identity of an area’s local Indigenous people. This can lead to a greater understanding, and is part of achieving broader reconciliation in Victoria.
2.1 Step 1: Identify Need for ‘Welcome to Country’ Signage

The first step in the process is to identify a need to install ‘Welcome to Country’ signage in a particular area.

2.1.1 Potential Sources for Proposals

This form of signage may be agreed to during the development of a project-specific agreement or cultural heritage management plan negotiated with a particular community, or may be something that eventuates as a result of general discussions with VicRoads Indigenous stakeholders. It may also arise as an initiative outcome of a whole of Government native title claim settlement, developed in consultation with VicRoads and the relevant Indigenous stakeholder group.

NB. If the signage initiative is agreed to as part of a project-specific agreement or cultural heritage management plan that agreement or plan must be drafted so as to make it clear that the installation of any such signage will be on the proviso of Department of Justice approval to that installation (see Step 3 below).

2.1.2 Determine Ability of VicRoads to Provide Specific Recognition to a Group

VicRoads will generally only install ‘Welcome to Country’ signage in areas where there is a clear and undisputed Indigenous group that is recognised as the traditional owner group for that area. Maps showing Victoria’s traditional owner groups can be found in the VicRoads Environmental Management Toolkit.
VicRoads understands that identification of traditional ownership or owners is not always clear and simple. Unfortunately there are currently several disputed traditional borders in Victoria and a number of native title claims in progress. Given the sensitivities involved in these disputed areas it will not be possible to place ‘Welcome to Country’ signs in these locations until those disputes have been resolved.

NB. ‘Welcome to Country’ signage may be developed to acknowledge more than one traditional owner group in cases where all relevant Indigenous groups agree to the signage being worded in that way.

VicRoads Environmental Sustainability is able to provide detailed advice and assistance to VicRoads Projects and Regions in determining whether specific recognition is able to be granted to a particular Indigenous stakeholder group in any given area of the State.

2.2 Step 2: Determine Signage Location

Once a need for ‘Welcome to Country’ signage has been identified it is important to determine where that signage will be installed. This is a critical part of any VicRoads ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiative and involves identifying both an appropriate location on a highway within the traditional country of the relevant Indigenous stakeholder group, and an installation position within the road reserve at that location.

These locations should be determined by the relevant VicRoads Project or Region in consultation with the relevant Indigenous stakeholder group, VicRoads Environmental Sustainability and VicRoads Network and Asset Planning.

2.2.1 Geographic Location

‘Welcome to Country’ signage should not be placed on a traditional border or boundary unless there is clear agreement from all parties (including Indigenous stakeholders) on that boundary. In all other cases it is preferable to place the signage well within the agreed boundaries of an Indigenous stakeholder group’s agreed traditional country.

2.2.2 Position within the Road Reserve

‘Welcome to Country’ signs should be placed on the left side of the carriageway at least 2 metres clear of the edge of the formation, and clear of any drains, or a minimum of 500mm behind an appropriate safety barrier. Consideration may be given to mounting these signs in the median (where available) in areas where erection is not practical on the left side.

In all cases ‘Welcome to Country’ signage should be located so that:

- It will not merely add to an excessive number of signs in a particular area, leading to driver distraction or an overload of information;
- It does not impact on sight distance requirements at intersections, traffic signs or devices, or visibility to other road users, such as pedestrians;
- It is as near as practicable to the edge of carriageway consistent with safety;
- It is within the approaching driver’s field of view for the greatest possible distance, or at least for sufficient time for the sign to be noticed and read;
- It is not obscured by natural or man-made features or by other road furniture; and
- It is as prominent as possible having regard to the background against which it is viewed.

2.3 Step 3: Obtain Internal and External Approval of Signage Proposal

After proposed locations have been determined it is important to obtain appropriate internal and external approvals for the ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiative to proceed.

These approvals should be obtained at this stage of the process to make sure that the work and stakeholder liaison involved in development of content and graphic design is only undertaken for ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives that have been authorised to proceed by both VicRoads and the State Government.

2.3.1 Internal Approval

The relevant Project team or Regional team should submit an initial ‘Welcome to Country’ signage proposal through the relevant Project Director or Regional Director to either the Executive Director – Major Projects or Executive Director – Regional Services. This proposal should outline:

- The proposed location for the signage (both in terms of geographic location and position within the road reserve); and
- The key Indigenous stakeholder group or groups involved.

NB. VicRoads Network and Asset Planning and VicRoads Environmental Sustainability should all be consulted during the development of this initial proposal.
2.3.2 External Approval – Department of Justice

Once internal VicRoads approval has been received it is important that the organisation also obtains endorsement to the initial ‘Welcome to Country’ signage proposal initiative from the Native Title Unit of the Department of Justice before the Project or Region proceeds to the next stage of the process.

Because ‘Welcome to Country’ signage has the potential to be seen as quasi-recognition by the State Government of the native title rights and interests of a particular Indigenous group, the installation of any such signage should be endorsed by the Department of Justice to avoid confusion and incorrect placement.

VicRoads Environmental Sustainability is able to provide assistance to VicRoads Projects and Regions in consulting with the Department of Justice on ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives.

2.4 Step 4: Develop Signage Content and Graphic Design

Once the relevant approvals have been obtained to proceed with the ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiative it will be important to work with all relevant Indigenous stakeholders to reach agreement on the text and graphics to be presented on the sign.

All ‘Welcome to Country’ signage should include the following elements:

A consistent basic graphic design;
A ‘Welcome to Country’ in the relevant Indigenous language/s and in English; and
An agreed graphic representing the local Indigenous group.

VicRoads Environmental Sustainability can provide advice and support to Projects and Regions in working with Indigenous stakeholders on signage initiatives.

NB To ensure consistency across the organisation, the graphic design and layout for all VicRoads ‘Welcome to Country’ signage should be developed and designed in consultation with VicRoads Environmental Sustainability, VicRoads Landscape and Urban Design and any relevant Indigenous stakeholders.

2.4.1 ‘Welcome to Country’ Signage Standard

VicRoads has developed a single standard (shown in the diagram below) in order to ensure that VicRoads provides the highest profile and clearest visibility ‘Welcome to Country’ signage possible whilst still meeting all relevant road safety requirements.

This standard provides a new and consistent signage language for the communication of Indigenous traditional country areas in Victoria. The standards reference the Aboriginal flag in colour and an abstracted form of a boomerang in layout.

All ‘Welcome to Country’ signage shall be:

1500mm in width x 3500mm in height;
Designed so that the bottom of the sign (plate) situ600mm from ground level;
Mounted on two Signfix 65mm or 80mm fluted aluminium sign poles in footings of galvanised steel in a continuous concrete footing (between posts); and
Fabricated from 1.5mm thick aluminium.

2.4.2 Graphic Design

At this stage VicRoads and all relevant Indigenous stakeholders will decide on the basic graphic design of the signage within the specified standard to best integrate text and graphics.

Base Graphic Design

There are two base graphic designs that can be used for ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives. The first uses the abstracted form of the boomerang arching to the top of the sign while the second arches to the base of the sign (as shown on p.8).
The colours to be used in the basic graphic design of all ‘Welcome to Country’ signage are as follows:

- Red – Pantone 484C;
- Black – Pantone Black (C); and
- Yellow – Pantone 1225C.

The basic graphic design of the signage provides an overall layout base from which to develop written and graphic content.

Font

The Lucinda Sans font should be used on all ‘Welcome to Country’ signage.

The use of this font will differentiate ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives from standard roads signage installations, while still achieving desired visibility outcomes.

2.4.3 Signage Text

Depending on the agreed location of the ‘Welcome to Country’ signage the wording to be used should be a variation on the following themes:

- Sign located on traditional border or boundary – ‘Welcome to … … Country’; or
- Sign located within the borders of the relevant traditional country – ‘You are in … … Country. Welcome.’.

In most cases fewer words will be encouraged to send a simple and clear message.

Ideally the signage should feature wording in both English and Indigenous language. Wherever possible the relevant Indigenous word or phrase for ‘welcome’ should be featured on ‘Welcome to Country’ signage. In most cases the traditional owners for the relevant area or the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VacLang) will be able to advise VicRoads staff on appropriate Indigenous wording.

It is important that all ‘Welcome to Country’ signs are legible and comprehensible to drivers at normal traffic speeds. To this end any such signage should be designed so that:

- All fonts are not smaller than 115mm and not greater than 130mm; and
- All lettering and other white components are reflectorised.

2.4.4 Signage Graphic Elements

Indigenous Graphic Elements

In addition to the ‘Welcome to Country’ text, the signage should also feature some form of graphic, logo or image that symbolises the relevant traditional owner group or groups, or their connection to country. The traditional owner group will be able to provide advice on the most appropriate graphic elements to use.

Ideally an electronic copy of all suggested graphic elements should be supplied to VicRoads in an appropriate graphic format (eg. tif, jpg or pdf) in the highest resolution available.

NB. In all cases VicRoads will agree to provide ‘Welcome to Country’ signage at no cost to the relevant Indigenous group or groups on the proviso that any graphic elements are provided for use on that signage at no cost to VicRoads.

As a result of design and layout requirements, and the need to ensure the sign can be read from the road at speed, VicRoads may need to adapt or interpret any graphic element provided by the relevant Indigenous stakeholders in order for it to be successfully incorporated into the final signage design. Where this is the case VicRoads will work with and consult traditional owners to obtain their endorsement of the final form of the graphic element.

Other Graphic Elements

As well as the Indigenous graphic element explained above each ‘Welcome to Country’ sign should also include both the VicRoads and Victorian State Government logos as small graphics in either the bottom left or bottom right corner of the sign.
Example – Indigenous Graphic Elements

The graphic on this page illustrates the development of graphic content in the context of a pilot ‘Welcome to Country’ signage concept developed for the Albury / Wodonga area. In that case, the Dhudhurow People requested that the graphic on a possum skin cloak be used as the graphic element to be incorporated into the signage; however, they wanted to omit the people and other graphics to the bottom of the image.

VicRoads responded to this request and, as shown in the design steps below, adjusted the graphic to contain only the requested elements.

2.5 Step 5: Review Final Signage Proposal

Before the ‘Welcome to Country’ signage is produced, it is important to allow all relevant stakeholders an opportunity to review the final signage proposal (including word use, graphic representation, design and location).

To facilitate this process, VicRoads will provide an electronic copy of the final signage proposal in portable document format (ie. pdf) for distribution to all internal and external stakeholders for comment. Key stakeholders for any ‘Welcome to Country’ signage proposal will include:

- The relevant VicRoads Project or Region;
- VicRoads Environmental Sustainability; and
- The relevant Indigenous stakeholder group or groups.

When all stakeholders have endorsed the final proposal, production and installation can commence.

2.6 Step 6: Production and Installation of Signage

VicRoads standard processes for the production and installation of road signage apply to all ‘Welcome to Country’ signage initiatives. Since this type of signage will be located on the roadside, it must comply with the relevant basic design, construction and safety standards and guidelines that apply to other roadside signage.

NB. VicRoads will prepare an electronic copy of the final signage proposal in portable document format (ie. pdf) at 1:1 size for production by a relevant signage provider.

The manufacture of ‘Welcome to Country’ signs should conform to the requirements of VicRoads Specification 860 – Manufacture of Road Signs, which outlines standard specifications for the manufacture and packaging of all road signs, both permanent and temporary that are made from steel or aluminium substrates.

Any ‘Welcome to Country’ signs shall be produced, installed, and maintained by VicRoads at no cost to any Indigenous stakeholder group.

Similarly, the erection of ‘Welcome to Country’ signs should conform to the requirements of VicRoads Specification 714 – Erection of Signs. Importantly, if these signs are located within the clear zone, the signs must be erected on frangible posts at an angle to the roadway which takes into account requirements for specular reflection.

More information on the relevant VicRoads signage production and installation requirements can be found in Chapters 4 and 6 of VicRoads Traffic Engineering Manual Volume 2 - Signs and Markings.

2.7 Step 7: Maintenance of Signage

The maintenance of ‘Welcome to Country’ signs should conform to the requirements of VicRoads Specification 750 – Routine Maintenance. In particular, the process requirements of Clause 750.C07 – RM611 Sign Repair and RM615 Sign Replacement should be observed.
For further information please phone 13 7171 or visit vicroads.vic.gov.au