

Questions and answers



Transport
Roads & Maritime
Services

A better way to navigate NSW roads

What is an alpha-numeric road numbering system?

An alpha-numeric road numbering system is a guidance system which uses a combination of a letter and a number to identify a route.

The letters link the road guidance system to national and state routes within NSW and include:

- **'M'** – meaning motorway standard road of national significance. Motorways are generally major roadways with a divided carriageway of two or more traffic lanes in each direction, where opposing traffic is separated by a median strip with controlled entries and exits. An example is the M5.
- **'A'** – routes of national significance (for example A39 Newell Highway from Victoria, through NSW to Queensland), or important arterial roads in major urban areas.
- **'B'** – routes of state significance, for example B78 Waterfall Way from Coffs Harbour to Armidale.

M5

A39

B78

Road numbers supplement road names and towns on direction signs for roads which have significance as through routes. These numbers are most important on routes that travel through many towns (e.g. A41 Olympic Highway) or along roads that have many road names (e.g. Sydney's A6 – from the Princes Highway at Heathcote to Pennant Hills Road at Carlingford).

The number identifies the route and helps drivers to navigate around the road system, particularly when they are travelling in unfamiliar areas.

Why change the existing road numbering system?

The current guide signposting system needs an overhaul because:

- There has been no significant review of route markers in NSW for 30 years.
- Markers need to be consistent with the agreed national guide signposting practice across State borders.
- A number of existing signs are confusing and have missing information, especially on Sydney's motorways.
- A combination of a letter and a number is easier for people to remember as a system to navigate NSW roads.
- Some important routes include numerous road names. For example, from Sydney airport across the City to the north, road users travel from General Holmes Drive, Southern Cross Drive, Dowling Street, Eastern Distributor Motorway, Cahill Expressway, Sydney Harbour Tunnel, Bradfield Highway, the Warringah Freeway and so on. Under the new system, the route will be marked as the M1.

What is a route marker?

On any typical green and white directional signpost there is a mix of information to help road users find their way. These can include:

- Route or road names
- Distance to next significant destination
- Destination name such as a city or town
- Directional arrows
- Route markers that are displayed as a number, quite often in a coloured shield.

Route markers are used when a route travels through many towns as there is not enough space on signs to list all the town names on a through route.

NSW currently has a range of route markers. They include:

- National Highway markers - yellow on green shield; used on federally funded National highways
- National route markers - black on white shield; used on interstate and intrastate routes of National significance
- State route markers- white on blue shield; used on intrastate routes of State significance
- Metroad markers - blue on white shield; used on the routes that form a radial and ring pattern in Sydney.



Why are route markers important to road users?

Apart from providing important directions to help people find their way, route markers:

- Help motorists navigate the road network, particularly when travelling long distances.
- Directional signs provide important reassurance to road users while on the road
- Road users want a consistent display of messages with an emphasis on route or road names.

Which routes will be allocated alpha-numeric road numbers?

The majority of State roads previously route marked with National Highway, National, State and Metroad route markers will now be assigned an alpha-numeric road number. A small number of previously marked State routes will not feature an alpha-numeric classification under the new system.

Additionally a number of important routes not previously route marked at all will now have a route number, e.g. the route connecting the Sydney to Newcastle Freeway and Newcastle City.

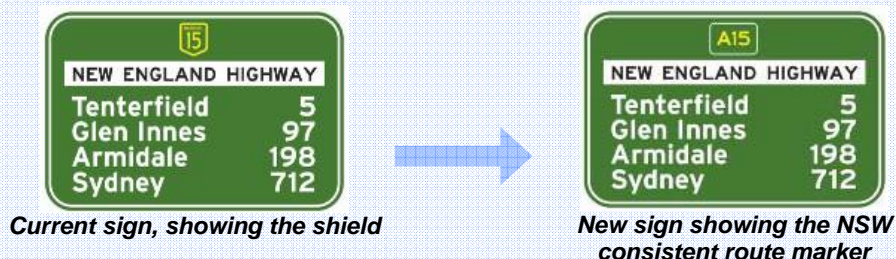
Why do some important roads not have alpha-numeric road numbers?

Some roads in Sydney and in regional NSW do not carry route markers as they simply connect two signposted destinations with no major towns, villages or side roads in between. In these cases the destinations can easily be signposted from each end of the road with the road name and the destination, the addition of a route marker provides no benefit in terms of wayfinding.

What changes will road users see as a result of these improvements?

Road users will see changes to the existing route markers shown on the green and white directional signs throughout NSW.

Roads previously marked with National Highways, National and Metroads route markers will now be marked by a letter M (motorway), A (route of national significance) or B (route of state significance) and a number from one to 99.



New road names will also be introduced on some motorways. Alpha-numeric route markers will **not** replace the brown and white tourist drive route markers.

What are the new motorway names?

Along with the alpha-numeric road numbers, RMS is also introducing new names on some important routes. These changes align with the motorway standard for the route and use of the 'M' alpha-numeric marker.

- The Sydney to Newcastle Freeway (commonly known as the 'F3') will become part of the **M1 Pacific Motorway**.
- The Pacific Highway between the Queensland border and north of Byron Bay will now be part of the **M1 Pacific Motorway**.
- The Southern Freeway and Mount Ousley Road from Waterfall to Albion Park Rail will become the **M1 Princes Motorway**.
- The M4 will become the **M4 Western Motorway** between Lapstone and Concord.
- The Hume Highway will be named the **M31 Hume Motorway** from the M5 at Prestons to Berrima, after which it will revert to the Hume Highway. The route will however retain the alpha numeric route marker M31.

When the changes are introduced, where applicable the signage which currently indicates the freeway start and finish points will also be changed to reflect the new motorway names.



I live on the Hume Highway, how do these changes affect me?

The Hume Highway will become the M31. From the M5 at Prestons to Berrima it will be named the M31 Hume *Motorway*. The route south of Berrima will be named the M31 Hume *Highway*.

If you live north of Berrima and your address is the Hume Highway, please get in touch with us. It is unlikely that any addresses will change, however in the months leading up to implementation of the new system, RMS is working with residents and businesses to identify potential impacts.

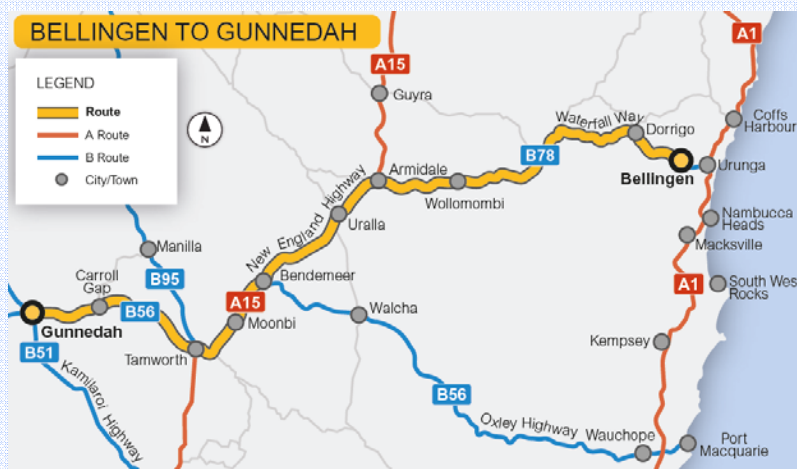
If you live south of Berrima and your address is the Hume Highway, it will remain exactly as it is.

How should I use the alpha-numeric road numbering to plan my trip?

The alpha-numeric road numbering system is helpful when driving in areas you are not familiar with. Some highways have towns and villages along the way, which may not all be shown on signposts or maps.

To use the system to plan a trip, look at the relevant map on the website and identify the road number/s you need to follow to reach your destination, noting the towns or intersections at which you need to change roads.

For example, if you wanted to travel from Bellingen to Gunnedah, you could take the B78 from Bellingen to Armidale, at Armidale you could take the A15 to Tamworth, and at Tamworth you could take the B56 to Gunnedah.



In some cases, the road number may not change at all even when the route takes you through multiple towns and villages. For example, if you wanted to travel from Kempsey to Grafton you would follow the A1 for the whole length of the trip.

What are the benefits of these changes for road users?

The new road numbering system will provide an easier way for road users to find their way around NSW roads, helping to make road journeys more efficient, safe and enjoyable. A combination of letters and numbers is easier for people to remember as a system for finding their way around.

It will also make planning a trip interstate easier, as all route numbers are consistent across State borders.

When will the changes occur?

The alpha-numeric road numbering system will be phased in from early 2013.

Initially, the new system will be introduced in the Sydney metropolitan area, on roads where the existing route number will change, and the State's motorway network.

RMS will then progressively implement the system across the rest of the State road network. The entire road network is expected to be updated with alpha-numeric road numbers by the end of 2013.

What road numbers will change under the new scheme?

In most cases, the number used as the route marker will remain the same and the only noticeable change will be the addition of a letter in front of the number. There are some roads where the road number will change as well as gaining a letter. These are listed below by region.

Sydney

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Princes Highway (Kogarah to City, Broadway)			North Sydney to Northern Beaches		
Hume Highway (Liverpool to City, Broadway)			Bells Line of Road		
Cumberland Highway (Sydney - Newcastle Freeway to Hume Highway, Prestons)			From the M2 at North Ryde to Pittwater Road, Dee Why		
Hume Highway (Prestons to Campbelltown)			From the Hume Highway at Liverpool to City, Newtown		

Northern NSW

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Oxley Highway (Coonabarabran to Port Macquarie)			Bruxner Highway (Pacific Highway, Ballina to New England Highway, Tenterfield)		
Gwydir Highway (Walgett to Grafton)			Kamilaroi Highway, (Newell Highway, Narrabri to New England Highway, Willow Tree)		

Hunter and Central Coast

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Doyalson to Newcastle			Northcott Drive at Adamstown Heights to Williamtown		
Industrial Drive (Central Newcastle to Warabrook)			Williamtown to Nelson Bay		
Warabrook to Hexham			Beresfield to Cessnock		
New England Highway (Beresfield to Branxton)			Warners Bay to Pacific Highway, Belmont		
Morisset to Wallsend			Warners Bay to Five Islands Road, Speers Point		
Newcastle Inner City Bypass (Windale to Sandgate)			Cardiff to the Sydney to Newcastle Freeway		
			Central Coast Highway (Kariong to Gosford)		

What road numbers will change under the new scheme? (cont.)

Southern NSW

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Snowy Mountains Highway (Hume Highway to Princes Highway)	18	B72	From Springhill Road Cringila to Northcliffe Drive, Warrawong	155	B65
Bulli Pass to Bourke Street, North Wollongong	60	B65	Old Hume Highway from Aylmerton to Bowral	79	B73
From Flinders Street, North Wollongong to Princes Highway, Dunmore	151	B65	Kangaloon and Sheepwash Roads (Bowral to Fitzroy)	80	B73
			Moss Vale Road (Fitzroy to Princes Highway, Nowra)	79	B73

South west NSW

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Mid-Western Highway (Hay to Cowra)	24	B64	Snowy Mountains Highway (Hume Highway to Princes Highway)	18	B72

Western NSW

Road/s	Old road number	New road number	Road/s	Old road number	New road number
Oxley Highway (Coonabarabran to Port Macquarie)	34	B56	Bells Line of Road	40	B59
Castlereagh Highway (Queensland border to Lithgow)	86	B55	Mid-Western Highway (Hay to Cowra)	24	B64
Kamilaroi Highway (Newell Highway, Narrabri to New England Highway, Willow Tree)	37	B51	Mid-Western Highway (Cowra to Bathurst)	24	A41
			Gwydir Highway (Walgett to Grafton)	38	B76

How has RMS determined the alpha-numeric road number for each route?

RMS has allocated the alphabetical character based on whether a road is considered of National or State significance from a guidance perspective. 'M' has been used where roads are of a motorway standard (i.e. major roadways with a divided carriageway of two or more traffic lanes in each direction, where opposing traffic is separated by a median strip with controlled entries and exits).

Where possible, the number used on old National or State route numbers have been reallocated to the new system. The numbers must also match cross-border.

How will GPS, online maps, paper maps and other way-finding information be updated to include these new road numbers?

RMS understands the new road numbering system will have implications for many people, including emergency services, mapping providers, tourism operators, businesses, residents and visitors.

RMS is working closely with key stakeholders, including emergency services, representatives from online mapping services, other map makers and tourism operators, to ensure they are able to update their systems and provide accurate and timely information on the alpha-numeric road numbering system to their customers and members.

RMS is liaising with hundreds of stakeholders about the changes and will continue to work with them to update digital and printed maps and customer information, to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

Our GIS files and mapping data can be provided in a variety of formats (including EPS, PDF and JPG). EPS data will be available to download. Our website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadnumbers has contact information. Please let us know if there is anything we can assist you with to help solve any problems you may encounter with the implementation of this new system.

If a route is marked as a 'M' or motorway, does it mean road users will need to pay additional or new tolls?

No. Not all motorways are tolled roads. The new alpha-numeric road numbering system will have no impact on the current toll arrangements on the NSW road network.

What other guide signposting improvements will be introduced at the same time as alpha-numeric road numbering?

As the new road numbering system is being rollout out and signposts are updated across the State, new signs will conform to consistent, State-wide standards.

This will result in the information on these signs being consistent; sign and font size being appropriate for the standard of road they are marking; and that the placement of the sign ensures it can clearly be seen.

What about tourist drive route markers?

Alpha-numeric route markers will **not** replace the brown and white tourist drive route markers.



Can the alpha-numeric road numbering system be changed after the system has been rolled out?

Yes, long-term road network changes are almost inevitable as NSW changes in time. The occasional addition or removal of an alpha-numeric route is likely.

RMS will try to ensure any changes are kept to a minimum so road users' understanding of the network keeps pace with any change and road maps do not need to be continually updated.

Do the alpha-numeric road numbers cross State borders and are they the same?

Yes, where major NSW roads cross into another State, the road number will remain the same as the neighbouring State.

In a few cases, the number will remain the same but the letter may change when it crosses a State border.

Border crossings from northern NSW

Border with	Location of crossing	NSW road number	Interstate road number
Queensland	Goondiwindi	A39	A39
	Tweed Heads	M1	M1
	Warwick	A15	A15

Border crossings from south west NSW

Border with	Location of crossing	NSW road number	Interstate road number
Victoria	Albury	M31	M31
	Cobram	A39	A39
	Echuca	B75	B75
	Mildura	A20	A20

Border crossings from western NSW

Border with	Location of crossing	NSW road number	Interstate road number
Queensland	Cunnamulla	B71	A71
	Hebel	B55	A55
	Goondiwindi	A39	A39
South Australia	Broken Hill	A32	A32

Border crossings from south west NSW

Border with	Location of crossing	NSW road number	Interstate road number
Victoria	Timbillica	A1	A1
	Bombala	B23	B23

What road numbering systems do other States use?

Most States and Territories in Australia are moving to an alpha-numeric road numbering system.

- **Tasmania** – was the first state in Australia to introduce an alpha-numeric road numbering system in 1979-1980.
- **Victoria and South Australia** – completely overhauled its directional sign posting system in the 1990s and has successfully introduced alpha-numeric road numbering.
- **Queensland** – major highways currently use alpha-numeric road numbering, as do major routes which cross the border into NSW.
- **ACT** – is planning to implement an alpha-numeric system on the Barton, Monaro, Kings and Federal Highways at the same time as the alpha-numeric system is introduced in NSW.
- **Northern Territory** - has started a conversion to alpha-numeric on a 'progressive replacement' basis meaning as signs are replaced, alpha-numeric route markers are used.
- **Western Australia** – although currently still using a numeric route marking system, Western Australia will convert to the alpha-numeric style once funds become available.

Why is this change happening now?

Approximately 95 per cent of Sydney's and 65 per cent of the State's road network has already been signposted 'behind the scenes' using the new alpha-numeric route marking system. The new signs have been 'cover-plated' from view, awaiting the roll-out of the new system. Given the high percentage of the State road network that is now ready to unveil the new signs, RMS has decided to commence the implementation of the new scheme.

Does the route number determine the funding allocated to each road?

No, the road numbering system has no bearing whatsoever on road funding levels.

Funding is determined by a number of factors, such as the road's safety performance (as indicated by incident data, road age and condition) and traffic performance, such as level of travel time delay.

What is the transition time from the existing to the new system?

The introduction of the new alpha-numeric road numbering system is due to start in early 2013 and is expected to be completed before the end of 2013.

How will I be able to use old maps if the routes no longer match the signposts?

RMS is working with wayfinding and mapping services, such as the NRMA and Google, to ensure information provided by online and mapping services will be corrected in time.

Road users with old maps will still be able to use key road and town names to plan their trip and find their way around the road network.

Will local, council controlled roads be signposted using the new system?

Local roads which are controlled by councils will not be affected by this change. The alpha-numeric road numbering system will only apply to State roads in NSW which are major through routes of National or State significance.

However some council roads have signs which point to the State road network, including road numbers. These will be updated in time.

Where are the alpha-numeric roads in New South Wales?

Detailed maps showing all the routes classified as M, A or B under the new numbering system are available to view and download on our website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadnumbers.

I will need to make changes to the information I provide to my customers about getting to my business, can I receive compensation for changes?

Businesses which need to provide updated information about travelling to their premises are welcome to use the maps provided on the RMS website in the information they provided to customers.

While compensation for changes is not available, RMS is liaising with hundreds of stakeholders about the changes and will continue to work with them to update digital and print maps and customer information, to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

RMS GIS files and mapping graphics can be provided in a variety of formats (including EPS, PDF and JPG). EPS data is available to download from our website at www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadnumbers. Please let us know if there is anything we can assist you with to help solve any problems you may encounter with the implementation of this new system.

Can customers nominate new roads for A or B marking and a number?

There is a national agreement about the road numbering system and many roads and their numbers are established by cross-border agreements. However, customers can suggest new roads for numbering to RMS. Given the complexity involved in making changes to the road numbering system, RMS would review suggestions periodically.

Have the new motorway names been registered with the Geographical Names Board?

Following consultation, the new motorway names will be registered with the Geographical Names Board of NSW.

What about legal action where a road name has changed to 'motorway'?

When a road is gazetted with a new name, the gazettal also shows the previous road name and the name is it commonly known as. This means all previous permits, agreements and approvals under the old road name, such as restricted road access permits, continue to apply.

Why aren't all sections of the Pacific Highway of motorway standard marked as such? More than 300km is now motorway standard.

RMS has attempted to limit the 'M' classification to those sections of motorway standard road between major town centres, so as to limit the number of changes between M1 to A1 sections along a length of road to avoid confusion. As sections of the Pacific Highway between major town centres are upgraded, the M classification will be implemented along those parts of the routes. This could also apply to other major routes.

Which policy documents refer to alpha-numeric route markers?

Austrroads Paper AP-R224/03: *Towards a Nationally Consistent Approach to Route Identity* can be downloaded for free at www.onlinepublications.austrroads.com.au/items/AP-R224-03.

Part 15 of Australian Standard 1742 refers to direction signs, information signs and route numbering, and RMS has internal policy documents and signposting guidelines that it adheres to in relation to route markers and roads signs.

Why indicate the M31 is a motorway but leave its name as the Hume Highway? Similarly, why indicate the M23 is a motorway but leave its name as the Federal Highway?

The 'M' alpha marker on these two roads indicates they are built to motorway standard. However, unlike other motorways such as the M2 or M4, some residences and businesses may front these roads and have them as their address. While RMS is reviewing any potential impacts changing the names of these roads may create, the roads will maintain their current names, but carry the alpha-markers M31 and M23.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about the project, to ask a question, or to download maps and GIS data:

- Visit our website: www.rms.nsw.gov.au/roadnumbers
- Call the project hotline: **1300 775 676**