

TSD Best Practice:

High-Visibility Signage for Australia's Bypassed Towns

Background

Several years ago, the New South Wales (NSW) government announced major infrastructure projects to several stretches of highway, facilitating more efficient travel in key regions.

The challenge? The existing highways were single-track roads that passed through towns, and these towns relied on through-traffic and tourism for revenue. With the new highway built, the towns would be bypassed by a majority of traffic.

To try to mitigate lost revenue from a reduced number of visitors, Tourism NSW looked for ways to inform travelers of key sites and areas of interest in the now bypassed towns in order to encourage people to pull off the highway and visit on their way to their destination.

The Solution

Tourism NSW partnered with 3M supplier Hi-Vis Group and 3M application engineers to come up with the perfect solution for drawing more visitors to bypassed towns — road signs with a picture of a key feature of the town, along with available services, positioned at the north and south exits of each town. However, these couldn't just be standard road signs. They had to be highly visible, legible at high speeds, conspicuous from varying distances, and visually appealing enough to attract the attention and interest of motorists. So the team came up with a challenging set of specifications:

- Signs to be made with no vertical joins, each aluminum panel to be one-piece continuous length of 1200mm high and up to 6m in width (47.2 inches high and up to 19.7 feet in width)
- VHB tape to fit the extrusions to make the picture look seamless
- Anti-graffiti film and UV overlamine
- Printed in 6 or 8 colors, minimum 600 dpi
- Must meet same reflectivity levels as standard road signs
- Minimum of 5-year warranty

Fortunately, 3M's sign sheeting materials, inks, overlaminates, and digital printing capabilities were up to the task.

To demonstrate the visual appeal and reflective performance of 3M signage, the team started with signs at two trial sites (Berry, which is south of Sydney, and Holbrook, which is north of Victoria). At the same time, they sent some of the signs to the 3M Transportation Safety Division in Singapore for accelerated weathering testing to make sure the signs could stand up to the elements. With these trials in place, they were ready to expand the project.

The Results

There will be initially a total of 32 digitally printed 3M signs installed along the Pacific Highway, the Princess Highway, and the New England Highway in New South Wales. These signs encourage tourism and draw in visitors and revenue that are crucial to the small towns in the region.

For the 3M team, partnership, collaboration, and thinking outside the box were key to the project's success. They were able to deliver a high-quality, high-performance, eye-catching solution that met demanding specifications and brought both a source of revenue and a source of pride to tourist towns throughout New South Wales.

“How-to” Guide

A step-by-step guide for successful digital sign printing projects.

- **Understand the goals:** Different projects require different solutions. To find the optimal solution, it's important to understand what you're trying to accomplish, for who, and why.
- **Determine the requirements:** Once you understand the goals, you can begin to talk about the requirements for meeting those goals. This can help you form a list of specifications that your solution must meet.
- **Explore solutions:** Based on your requirements and specifications, you can start exploring solutions.
- **Plan a pilot program:** Identify key locations to test your ideas. These tests will help you show that your solution meets the specifications.
- **Implement:** Work with key stakeholders to plan the execution of the project.

Who do I contact?

Gina Parker

Global Marketer – Signing
gmparker@mmm.com

Shelly Toscano

Global Marketer – Signing
sjtoscano@mmm.com

Graham Watson

Sales Representative – Australia
glwatson@mmm.com



Transportation Safety Division
3M Center, Building 0225-04-N-14
St. Paul, MN 55144-1000 USA

Phone 1-800-553-1380
Web 3M.com/roadsafety

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