

Understanding key terms

Regulation of traffic and PTCD

transport.nsw.gov.au | July 2025

What is 'regulation of traffic'?

'Regulate traffic' is defined in the [Dictionary](#) of the Roads Act 1993 to mean "restrict or prohibit the passage along a road of persons, vehicles, or animals"

- Regulation of traffic can be permanent or temporary.
- Temporary regulation happens at worksites every day – usually for safety reasons.
- Permanent regulation includes network changes – such as a mid-block road 'closure' for vehicles that is permeable to people walking or riding bicycles.
- Examples of 'restrict(ing) passage' include one-way controls, peak hour turn bans, or mandatory turns.
- Road features such as roundabouts, raised thresholds, speed humps, or narrower lanes are **not** regulation of traffic because they do not restrict or prohibit passage.

What is a 'prescribed traffic control device' (PTCD) and what is a 'traffic control device'?

A 'prescribed traffic control device' (PTCD) is a sign, signal, marking, structure, or other device that is subject to a Road Rule (meaning penalties apply if ignored).

- Stop signs, traffic signals, dividing lines, and speed limits are all examples of PTCD.
- A 'traffic control device' directs or warns traffic but is not associated with a penalty. An example is a 'curve ahead' sign.
- PTCD are defined in [s121](#) and use requires Transport's authorisation under [s122](#) of the Road Transport Act 2013. (See also [s26](#) of the Road Transport (General) Regulation 2021.)
- The Authorisation and Delegation Instrument provides this authorisation, subject to conditions and exclusions.



What is a 'traffic control facility' and what is 'traffic control work'?

'Traffic control facilities' include both ordinary and prescribed traffic control devices, as well as some other facilities, such as pedestrian bridges and underpasses.

- For a full definition, refer to [s8A](#) in Schedule 1 the Transport Administration Act 1988 and [s9](#) of the Transport Administration (General) Regulation 2018.
- 'Traffic control work' is any activity in connection with the installation, maintenance, or removal of a traffic control facility (refer to the [Dictionary](#)).

Council's powers

- [s71](#) of the Roads Act 1993 grants councils the power to do road work (defined in the [Dictionary](#))
- [s87](#) of the Roads Act 1993 grants councils the power to carry out traffic control work
- [s115](#) of the Roads Act 1993 grants councils the power to regulate traffic to undertake road work, other work, and for other prescribed purposes such as preventing damage to a road

Transport's powers

- [ss71, 87](#) of the Roads Act 1993 allow Transport to do road work and traffic control work on any road
- [s115](#) of the Roads Act 1993 grants Transport the power to regulate traffic 'for any purpose'
- The Authorisation and Delegation Instrument delegates Transport's [s115](#) power to councils (subject to conditions), which means councils can also regulate traffic for any purpose – inc. a parade or event



This note is intended to aid practitioners using the Authorisation and Delegation Instrument. To ensure legal and technical compliance, please refer to the Instrument itself, the associated Guide, and Transport's [website](#).