

# DERESTRICTED – A SURE SIGN TO USE JUDGEMENT

The Derestricted sign is the original open road speed sign, having been in use in NZ since ages ago when our roads were pretty darn average and the cars weren't much better. It fell out of favour when rural road limit options expanded and we got very specific about giving numbers to drivers. Where you still see it today is typically on roads with a legal limit set to 100 km/h but where the design speed is well below that – this avoids actively suggesting that it is a high speed road. It's definitely a nuance, and an unwritten convention, but it is a great low cost tool that we already have sitting in the bag.

## NOT ALWAYS A TARGET

Speed limits are often perceived as a target speed, and people often expect that roads are designed to be driven at that speed (and then some). Although this isn't the intent, it's a message that young drivers often retain from the license testing process.

## THE GREAT 'THEY'

People have a lot of faith in 'They':  
"They wouldn't make the speed limit 100 if it's not safe."  
"They said I can drive it at least at 100."  
"They will have designed it for 100".

However, 'They' have 100 km/h limits on many roads that aren't designed for driving (or crashing) at 100 km/h. The reasons are varied and include economic, political, regulatory and high variance in design speed.



The limit on this road is 100 km/h but it is clearly not designed for it. Although installing 100 signs after the worksite would be correct, I was not keen to actively encourage people to have a crack at 100 km/h.

What do you think?

When road design speed changes a lot along a route, there is no single speed that works as a reliable guide for how fast drivers should travel. Constantly changing the posted speed limit to match every change in design speed would be impractical and confusing.

The key point is that the speed limit does not always reflect the road's design or operating speed.

## SAME LIMIT, DIFFERENT REALITY.

The 100 and Derestriction signs have the same legal meaning – the limit is 100 km/h. However, in practice, the Derestriction sign has generally been selected on roads that are narrow, winding, perhaps unsealed, etc, where putting a 100 sign in front of drivers would send the wrong message.

