

- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

Princes Highway East – keeping our community moving

Improving the flow of local traffic, tourism connections, and freight movement through Bairnsdale on the Princes Highway supports growth, reduces time to market, and improves local road network resilience.

Why improving the Princes Highway East is needed

Princes Highway East through Bairnsdale is a nationally significant freight and visitor route and a key gateway to East Gippsland.

Limited capacity at the Mitchell River crossing and adjacent approaches is creating regular peak-period congestion and unreliable travel times. Queues routinely extend back into the Bairnsdale CBD and through Lucknow in both directions, disrupting freight movements for major local manufacturers and affecting local access and tourism traffic.

Our community is asking for

A commitment from the Victorian Government to progress the duplication of the Mitchell River Bridge to a dual-lane configuration, alongside associated upgrades to Princes Highway East, improving capacity and network resilience.

A staged approach to improvements would consider:

- Completion of a feasibility study and options assessment including traffic modelling, concept design and costings for Princes Highway East (Bairnsdale and through Lucknow) capacity improvements.
- Confirm a preferred upgrade option and staging plan for the Princes Highway / Phillips Lane intersection and surrounding approaches.
- Consideration of an interim solution to unlock additional traffic capacity
 - Investigate the repurposing of the railway bridge as a pedestrian link across the Mitchell River.
 - Investigate a three-lane model for the Mitchell River Bridge that alternates between two lanes in one direction and one lane in the opposite direction to support increased point-in-time traffic volumes.
- Prepare a detailed business case to secure Commonwealth construction funding for duplication/replacement of the Mitchell River Bridge.

Background

The Princes Highway East corridor between Paynesville Road and Phillips Lane includes the Mitchell River crossing and approaches that now operate at or beyond



- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

capacity.

The existing configuration (single lane each direction through the constricted section) cannot meet current or forecast demand, resulting in recurring congestion that extends into the Bairnsdale CBD and undermines freight efficiency.

The Phillips Lane, Lucknow, intersection is critical to improve driver safety and improve traffic flow and freight movement, including fresh produce to market (seafood from Lakes Entrance) and Patties Foods.

East Bairnsdale through to Nicholson and onto Lakes Entrance, and Wy Yung / Eastwood are residential growth areas. Network resilience is constrained because the nearby Lind Bridge is prone to closure during flooding, often leaving the Princes Highway crossing as the only viable route across the Mitchell River. This reduces emergency access during bushfires, floods and other incidents further increasing congestion.

A new roundabout at the McEacheren Street intersection was a good first steps in safety improvements in this corridor, however further investment is needed to capitalise on this work.

With Commonwealth funding already committed to early planning through the Princes Highway Corridor Program, a matched State funding commitment is required to unlock construction and ensure timely delivery of this significant freight corridor upgrade.

More information

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