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MEDIA RELEASE

Western councils unite behind vision for a safer, stronger Western Highway

The Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC), representing 10 municipalities across Victoria's west, has released a new advocacy prospectus outlining a shared vision and investment priorities for the Western Highway corridor from Melton to the South Australian border.

The prospectus identifies key projects needed to improve safety, freight efficiency, regional connectivity and the long-term resilience of one of Australia's most important interstate transport routes.

Since its establishment in 1999, WHAC has been a strong and consistent advocate for upgrades to the Western Highway, helping secure significant infrastructure investments. The committee's latest prospectus builds on that legacy by setting out a coordinated roadmap for future investment and collaboration between local government and all levels of government.

The prospectus outlines WHAC's long-term aspiration of achieving a fully duplicated, freeway-standard Western Highway from Melbourne to the South Australian border, while prioritising immediate projects that address critical safety and capacity constraints. These include duplication between Buangor and Ararat, construction of the Beaufort Bypass, upgrades between Melton and the M80, the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road connections, duplication between Ararat and Stawell, and an improved maintenance program.

Chair of the Western Highway Action Committee Cr Rod Ward, from Moorabool Shire Council, said the prospectus demonstrated the united commitment of western Victorian councils to improving one of the state's most significant transport corridors.

"For more than two decades, WHAC has provided a strong and united voice for communities along the Western Highway. While significant progress has been made, there is still important work to do to ensure the corridor meets the needs of our growing communities, freight operators and visitors."

"This prospectus sets out a practical and considered roadmap for future investment. Our priorities focus on improving safety, reducing travel delays, strengthening freight productivity and connecting regional communities with jobs, services and opportunities."

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Western Highway Action Committee Member LGAs: Melton City * Moorabool Shire * Ballarat City * Pyrenees Shire * Ararat Rural City * Yarriambiack Shire * Northern Grampians Shire * Horsham Rural City * Hindmarsh Shire * West Wimmera Shire

"The Western Highway is not only the lifeblood of western Victoria, it is a nationally significant freight route connecting Melbourne with Adelaide & Perth. Continued investment is essential to ensure it remains safe, efficient and fit for the future."

"The WHAC was formed in 1999 - which coincidentally was when the Western Ring Rd was completed – and notably the total population along the Western Highway in 1999 was approx.. 180,000. The only major infrastructure investment on the Western Highway since then was the construction of the Deer Park Bypass and today the population along the Highway has grown to an estimated 453,000. By 2046, this population is expected to exceed 750,000."

"Investment in the Western Highway has been neglected for too long and we call on the State Government to rectify this."

WHAC member councils are encouraging the Victorian and Australian governments to continue partnering with local government to deliver the next generation of upgrades identified in the prospectus.

Suggested mayoral comments for member councils

Cr Lara Carli - Mayor, City of Melton

"The City of Melton is Australia's fastest-growing local government area and the need for ongoing investment in transport has been recognised with the combined \$1.55 billion in funding from the Victorian and Australian governments to deliver additional lanes on the Western Freeway, between Melton and Caroline Springs and upgrades to several key interchanges. As the second largest freight carrier of any national highway, Melton City Council supports continued investment across this nationally significant corridor to improve safety, productivity and connectivity across the state."

Cr Steve Vendetti-Taylor - Mayor, Moorabool Shire Council

"Moorabool sits at the gateway to western Victoria and projects such as the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Link Road connections and freeway upgrades will play an important role in supporting future growth and improving connectivity."

Cr Ben Taylor – Acting Mayor, City of Ballarat

"The Western Highway is a key economic and transport corridor for Ballarat and western Victoria. Delivering further upgrades will improve access to jobs, education and services while supporting regional economic growth."

Cr Damien Ferrari - Mayor, Pyrenees Shire Council

"Projects such as the Beaufort Bypass will improve safety outcomes, support freight movement and enhance liveability for local communities."

Cr Bob Sanders - Mayor, Rural City of Ararat

"Completing duplication between Buangor and Ararat and progressing the Ararat-Stawell duplication are critical next steps in creating a safer and more consistent highway corridor."

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Cr Karen Hyslop – Mayor, Northern Grampians Shire

"Improved road safety, freight efficiency and network resilience are essential for communities across the Grampians region and the broader western corridor."

Cr Brian Klowss - Mayor, Horsham Rural City Council

"As a major regional centre, Horsham relies on a safe and efficient highway network to connect businesses, freight operators and communities across western Victoria."

Cr Ron Ismay - Mayor, Hindmarsh Shire Council

"For communities across Hindmarsh Shire, the Western Highway is far more than a road. It is a critical freight route, a connection to essential services and a key driver of economic activity. We support WHAC's call for sustained investment to improve safety, reliability and network resilience so the highway can meet the needs of regional Victoria now and into the future."

Cr Andrew McLean - Mayor, Yarriambiack Shire Council

"Reliable transport infrastructure is fundamental to our agricultural sector and regional economy, making continued investment in the highway corridor a priority."

Cr Tim Meyer - Mayor, West Wimmera Shire Council

"Communities in Victoria's far west depend on the Western Highway for safe and reliable access to services, freight networks and neighbouring regions. This prospectus highlights the importance of maintaining momentum on future upgrades."

Any queries or for further comment please contact Western Highway Action
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