



Princes

Highway West

Colac to the South Australian border



Time for a plan

The fertile Great South Coast region of Victoria produces a third of Victoria's beef, a third of its dairy, a third of its lamb and one quarter of its wool.

The vast majority of this produce - worth more than \$1.8 billion - is bound for markets further afield, mostly international.

A key to the ongoing prosperity of the Great South Coast is an effective transport network. Central to this network is the Princes Highway.

The Princes Highway West is the key east-west route in

south-western Victoria, providing a strategic transport link between Melbourne and the South Australian border, and beyond to Adelaide.

The highway conveys grain, livestock, dairy, timber and smelter products.

It also conveys people in growing number.



Time for a plan

While traffic on the highway has grown in volume in recent years, the highway infrastructure west of Colac has received only minor upgrades.

It has been 18 years since the last VicRoads strategy for the Princes Highway West was produced. It is time for a new plan.

The Princes Highway bridge over the Merri River at Dennington has not had an engineering assessment for AB-double vehicles, placing a restriction on freight movement between key local transport nodes.

More than a decade ago VicRoads reported the crash rate was greater than the state average in the winding sections between Colac and Warrnambool and between Portland and Heywood.

The majority of these were 'run off the road' fatigue-related or head-on due to driver error.

Accident hotspots also occur where the highway intersects with busy urban streets, particularly in Warrnambool.

Outside a limited number of passing lanes, there have been no significant improvements to what remains a dangerous stretch of highway.

Princes Highway at Dennington, Warrnambool



Danger zones

Nine fatalities, 80 serious injuries and 141 other injuries.

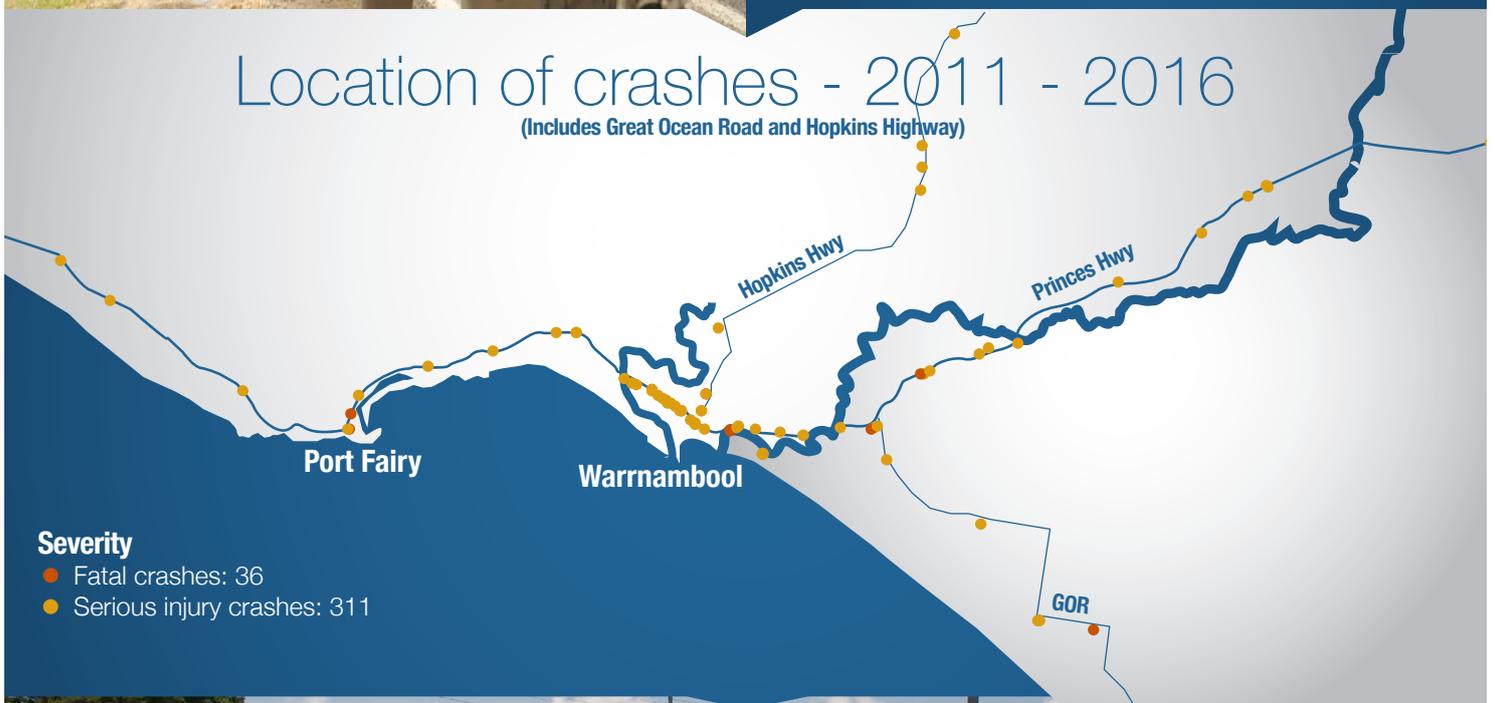
Those figures represent the human toll on the Princes Highway over a five-year period to June 2016 between Colac and the South Australian border.

Over the same period the short 9.4km stretch of the highway from Swan Lane, Allansford, to Mahoneys Road, Warrnambool has seen one fatality, seven serious injuries and seven other injuries.

The highway as it passes through Warrnambool is also a serious accident zone. The 13.9km stretch has recorded one fatality, 22 serious injuries and 58 other injuries.

Location of crashes - 2011 - 2016

(Includes Great Ocean Road and Hopkins Highway)



Severity

- Fatal crashes: 36
- Serious injury crashes: 31



The growth in traffic

2016 vehicles per day (VPD) counts show that stretches of highways in and around Warrnambool are among the busiest on the regional sections of the Princes Highway.

Traffic counts		
Location	1999	2016
Central Warrnambool	13,000	20,000
Warrnambool to Port Fairy (Allansford)	5,000	13,000
Great Ocean Rd intersection		13,000

Traffic numbers over the past 15 years along section of highway at Warrnambool have increased by about 50 per cent. The VPD counts from VicRoads most recent

Princes Highway West Corridor Strategy (1999) indicate vehicle counts in Warrnambool's urban area were about 13,000. They are now 20,000 and this figure includes a commercial/heavy vehicle number estimated at 2,400.

VPD between Warrnambool and Port Fairy are currently 13,000, compared to 5,000 in 1999. This single lane stretch is a high accident zone and populations of both urban centres continue to grow.

The growing traffic volumes have impact the road surfaces and created some challenges around maintenance schedules.

The economic imperative

In 2014–15, Victoria accounted for 27 per cent of Australia's total food and fibre exports and remained Australia's largest state exporter. Victoria has a 25 per cent share of Australia's total food exports and a 40 per cent share of Australia's total fibre exports (Food and Fibre Report Victoria 2014-2015).

Victoria accounted for 83 per cent of Australia's dairy exports by value. Milk and cream products (worth just over \$1 billion) and cheese and whey products (worth \$748 million) were the most valuable dairy export categories, making up 89 per cent of Victoria's dairy exports. (Food and Fibre Report Victoria 2014-2015).

A growing region

The population of the South West, traversed by the Princes Highway West, continues to grow and the highway performs an important commuter service.

Municipal/Urban area	Population 1996	Population 2011	2036 Projection
City of Greater Geelong	174,800	210,875	320,791
Winchelsea	1,000	1,579	
Colac	9,800	11,778	
Camperdown	3,200	3,463	
Warrnambool	26,100	32,029 (now 35,000)	46,742
Port Fairy	2,600	2,835 (excludes visitor popn)	
Portland	9,700	9,950	

The target for Victoria

Victoria has set a target of fewer than 200 deaths per year by 2020. If the trend over recent years continues, this target will not be achieved. Deaths in regional Victoria continue to be higher than those in metropolitan Melbourne and resolving the challenges of the Princes Highway West is part of the solution to achieving the lower road trauma ambition.

(2015 Victorian Road Trauma - Analysis of Fatalities and Serious Injuries)

The Victorian Government has highlighted the impact of serious injury arising from road accidents and why they must be prevented:

"We also want much better outcomes for people who survive serious crashes. This is the 'hidden road toll', affecting about 5,000 people a year whose lives are suddenly upended by the physical and mental trauma of road crashes."

From Towards Zero 2016-2020 Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan.

Our ask

We are seeking a strategy for the Princes Highway West between Colac and the South Australian border that clearly identifies the improvements and upgrades the highway will require.

It is anticipated the corridor strategy would include:

- Duplication of the Princes Highway between Warrnambool and Port Fairy
- Additional, improved and more regular passing opportunities between Colac and the border. These would need to be longer lanes providing safer passing opportunities for both east and west-bound traffic
- Investigation into feasibility of the 2 + 1 model
- Investigation into the feasibility of more overtaking lanes
- Investigation into the feasibility of duplication of the highway between Colac and the border

Funding to implement the recommendations of a strategy for the Princes Highway West will also be required.



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