

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

WESTERN HIGHWAY UPGRADE – BUANGOR TO ARARAT

SEPTEMBER 2026



We're getting on with upgrading the Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat, making your journey safer and more reliable.

With upgrades complete between Ballarat and Buangor, we're starting work upgrading the 12 kilometres of Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat.

As the number of vehicles travelling along this section of the highway has significantly increased over the years, so too has the crash rate, with 158 crashes and 22 fatalities on the Western Highway between Ballarat and Stawell in recent years.

With only one lane in each direction, this busy stretch of highway has limited safe overtaking opportunities, which can make travel times less reliable.

As part of the upgrade, we'll:

- add an extra lane in each direction to provide safer overtaking opportunities and improve journey reliability
- add a centre median that will separate carriageways, reducing the likelihood of vehicles accidentally veering into oncoming traffic
- install barriers to reduce the risk of head-on collisions
- build a new interchange at Hillside Road to make it easier and safer for vehicles to enter and exit the Western Highway
- build new bridges over the railway line and the Hopkins River.

Upgrading this section of the Western Highway will make it safer for the many road users who rely on it, including freight, farming, grain production and tourism.

Moving toward construction

- ☒ Design
- ☒ Cultural Heritage Management Plan
- ☒ Planning Scheme Amendment
- ☒ Environmental approvals
- ☒ Detailed construction plan
- ☒ Mobilise crews
- ☒ Begin early works
- ☐ Late 2026
Start major construction

Image: The Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat.



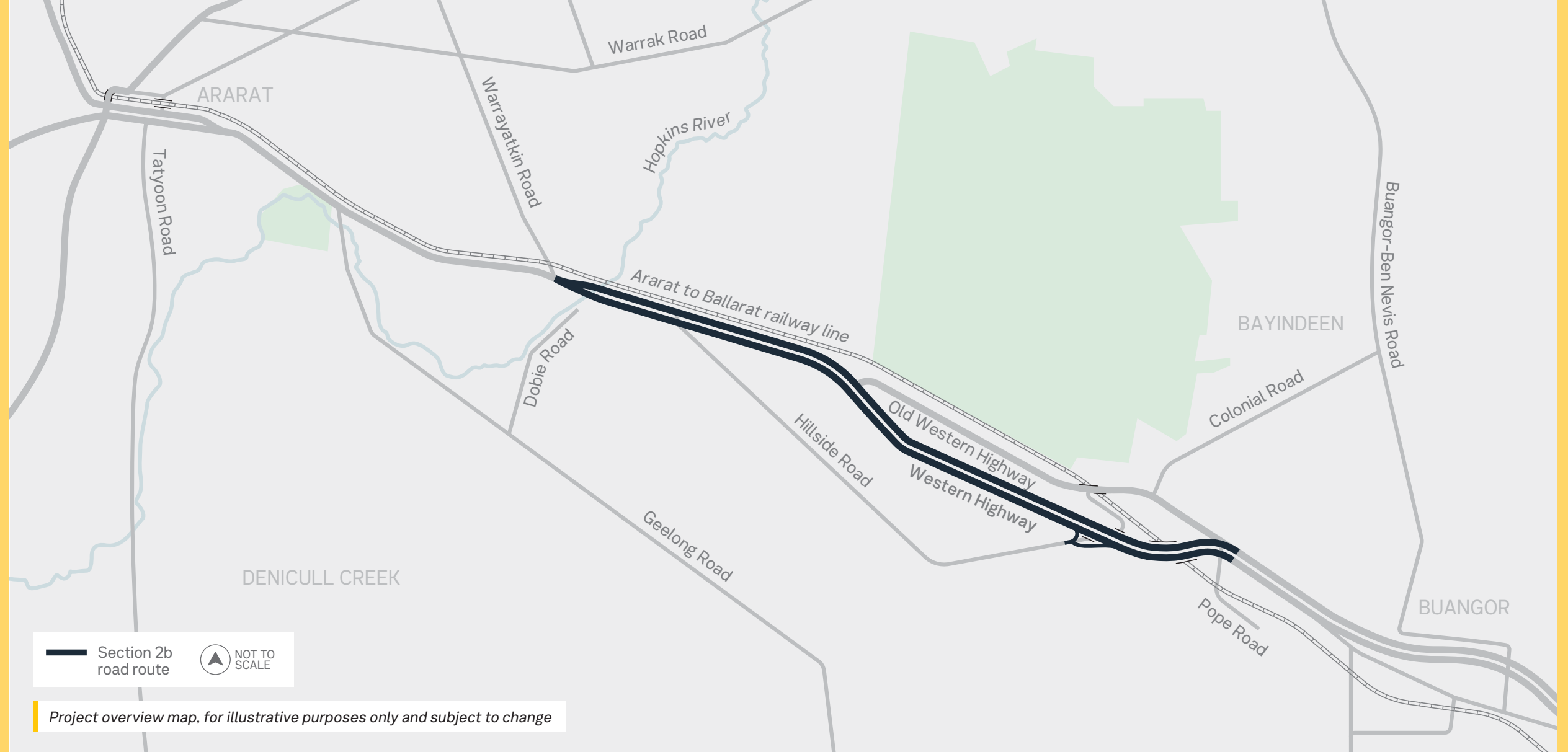
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12KM OF NEW LANES

The project will add 12km of new lanes between Pope Road in Buangor and Warrayatkin Road, just outside of Ararat. We'll share the project designs before major construction begins later this year.

The project will also provide a major economic boost to the area, and create opportunities for local employment, trades and businesses.



PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

We've revised the project design to deliver a safer, more efficient Western Highway while reducing the impact on the environment and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

This includes shifting the new highway alignment at Pope and Warrayatkin roads and closing Dobie Road at the Western Highway to avoid culturally and environmentally significant areas.

Following extensive consultation with regulatory authorities and the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP), the revised design aims to protect culturally significant places within and near the road alignment while reducing the impact on the surrounding environment.

We've also worked closely with the RAP to develop the project's Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), which the RAP approved in March this year.

As part of the CHMP, Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area was identified, assessed and recorded, including several culturally significant trees.

We have recently installed protective fencing around several trees that will be retained within the project area, including trees identified through the CHMP process and others with recognised environmental values.

We've also improved the mitigation strategies for flora, fauna and other environmental impacts, with the RAP taking an active role in ongoing inspections and monitoring throughout the project area.

While we'll build the new lanes through mostly cleared farmland, some tree removal is unavoidable.

We will only remove trees which will be directly impacted by new infrastructure. We're also working closely with qualified ecologists and arborists to retain and protect trees near the upgraded road.

What we do remove will be subject to strict controls in line with the project's environmental and planning permits and the approved CHMP.

Where possible, timber from removed trees will be reused to create new wildlife habitats and control erosion, support cultural preservation, or will be donated to local community groups. We'll share more information on this early next year.



Cultural Heritage Management Plan

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan identifies and assesses how the proposed project works may affect Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area and sets out measures to protect and manage it before, during and after the works.



Registered Aboriginal Party

A Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) is a Traditional Owner organisation formally recognised under Victoria's *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* to protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage in a defined area.

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation is the RAP for Djab Wurrung Country, which includes the project area.



The Western Highway between Buangor and Ararat

WHAT'S COMING UP

From October, you'll see more people working on site as we get ready for major construction.

We'll install site compounds and build new and upgraded access tracks, which we'll use to safely move workers, vehicles and equipment in and out of the works area during construction.

We'll also start to make room to build the new lanes and road infrastructure. This will include clearing some trees and vegetation.

Have a question?

If you have a question about these works or the project, please call us on **1800 105 105** or email **contact@bigbuild.vic.gov.au**

For more information, go to the Western Highway Upgrade webpage.

What you can expect

While we work, traffic management will be in place at times **between 6am and 6pm, Mondays to Fridays**.



You may encounter lane closures, speed reductions to 40km/h, temporary traffic lights or traffic controllers, and delays of up to 5 minutes.



For your safety, and the safety of our workers, please observe speed limits and signs and follow the directions of our traffic controllers. We recommend allowing extra time for your journey during these hours.



Weather conditions may affect our progress. Please see on-road signage or visit bigbuild.vic.gov.au for the most up-to-date information.



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