



# Western Highway Action Committee (WHAC)

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Horsham Rural City Council



# Western Highway Action Committee

- Brief history of highway development
- Formation of WHAC
- What are the current priorities?
- How will we get there?
- A parting message



# *a drive along the Western Highway*



# Some improvements



# Brief History of Highway Works

- Some duplication from mid 1960s.
- Various sections
  - Deer Park,
  - near Melton,
  - Anthony's Cutting,
  - Pykes Ck Reservoir
- Highway still went through all towns.
- Pentlands Hill car park.
- Bacchus Marsh bypass 1972 (9 km, \$4.3 M)





# Hopetoun Cemetery, near Bacchus Marsh

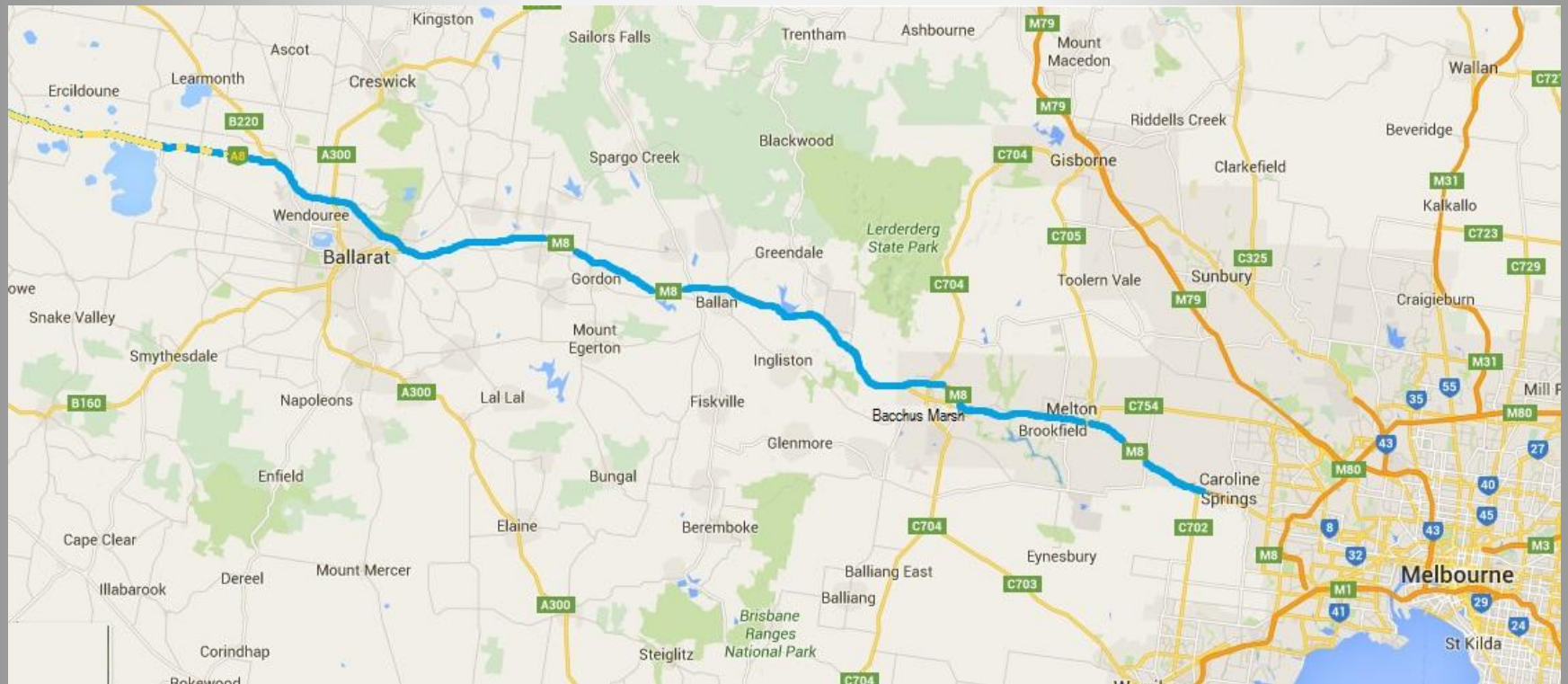


# Brief History of Highway Works

- Completion of 80 km dual carriageway to Ballarat (1975)
- 1987 Melton bypass (8.8 km, \$44 M)
- 1993-98 Ballarat bypass



# Duplication progress 1990s





# VicRoads 1998



## Western Highway M8/A8 Corridor Strategy

Deer Park to South Australian Border



- Corridor – nationally, second busiest for interstate freight
- Broad range of works
- Major projects including further duplication
- Other works, e.g. further overtaking lanes, Armstrong overpass
- Planning studies, e.g. Ararat bypass
- Mapped out a 15-year program...
- ... subject to funding
- How would it be funded?

# WHAC Formation

- Formed in 2000
- Modelled on highly successful Calder Highway Improvement Committee
- Group of 10 Councils along WH corridor – from the edge of Melbourne to SA border
- Objectives include:
  - To pursue the improvement, safety, upgrading and amenity of the Western Highway.
  - To lobby and obtain allocation of Government funding for the implementation of approved strategies for the construction, planning and maintenance of the Western Highway.

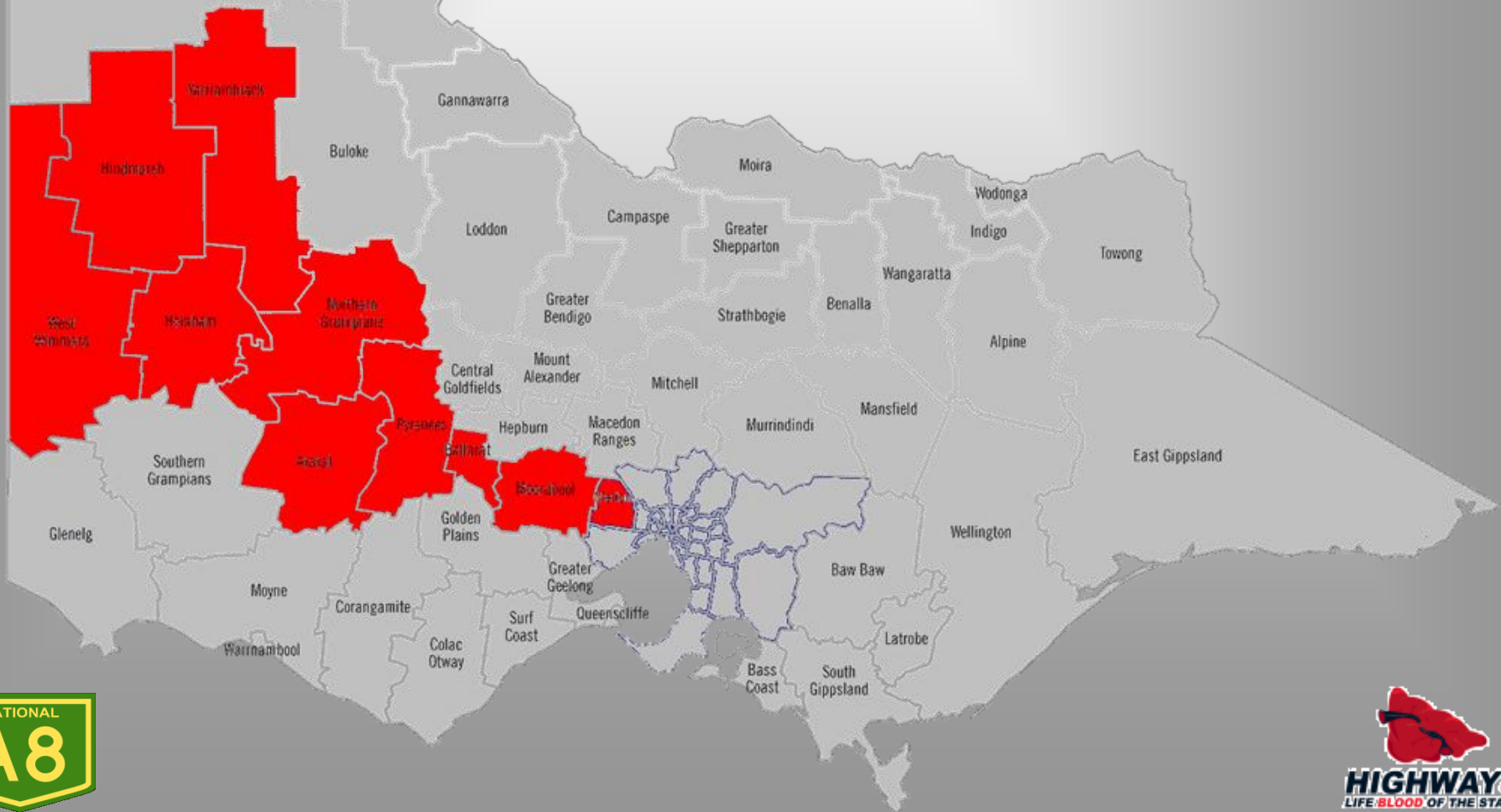




Ararat Rural City



Horsham Rural City  
Council urban rural balance



# WHAC Functions

- Develop data-based strategies to inform prioritisation from WHAC's perspective
- ***A shared set of priorities***
- Lobby for funding for these
  - Preparation of material to support this
  - Media campaigns
  - Direct lobbying of politicians
- All of this, working in close liaison with the regional office of VicRoads



# The history continues ...

- Hopkins Rd overpass – Rockbank (2001)
- Deer Park bypass – *finally a link to the metropolitan freeway system* (2009)
- Anthony's Cutting realignment (2011)
- Duplication through to Beaufort (2015)
- Restoration of the Avenue of Honour (2015)





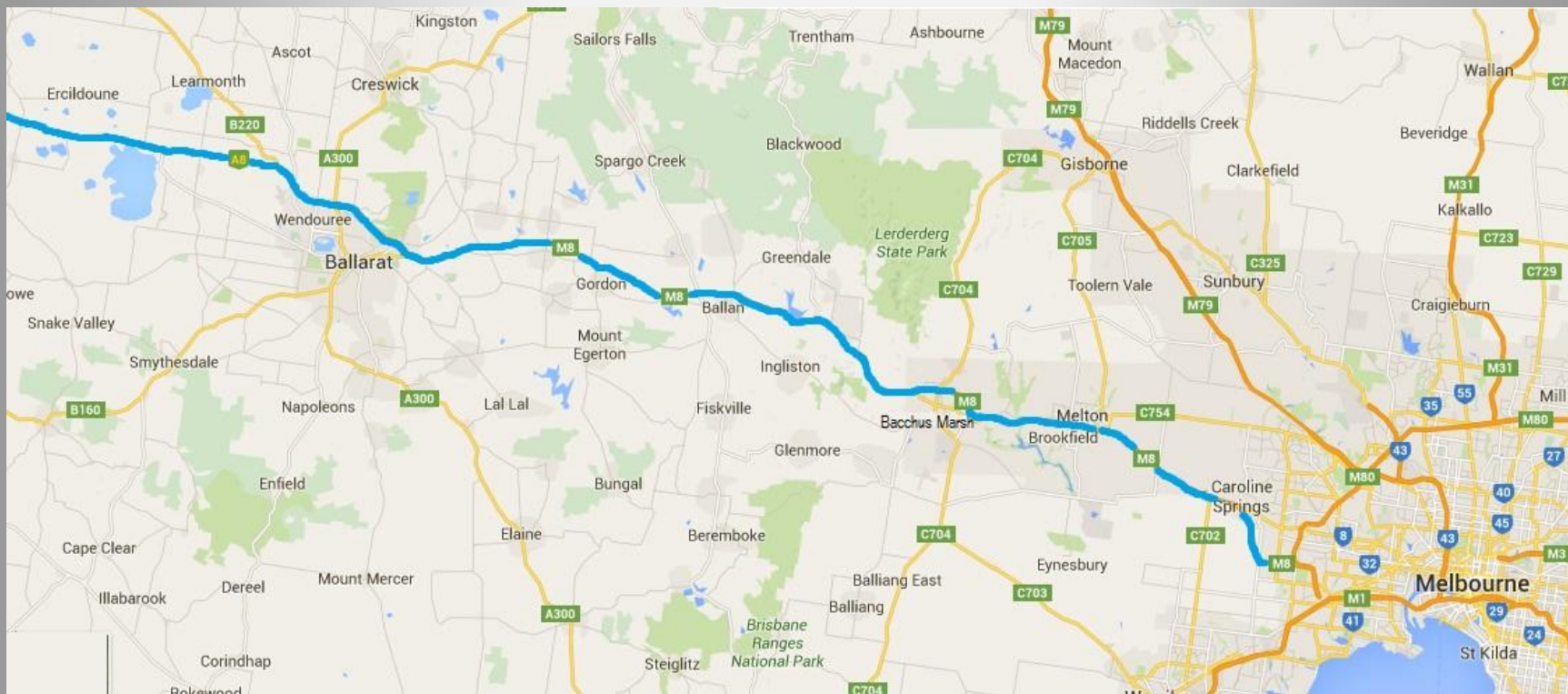




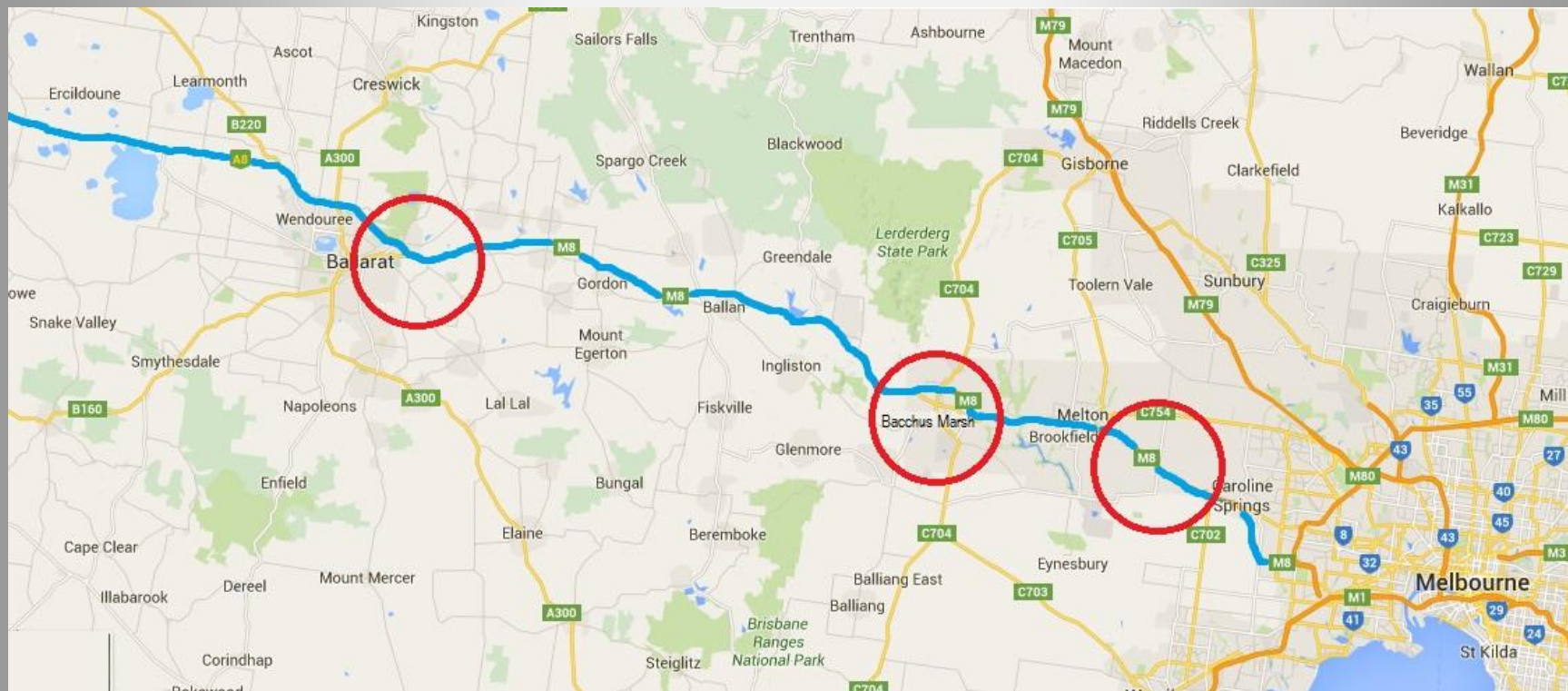




# Current priorities (east)

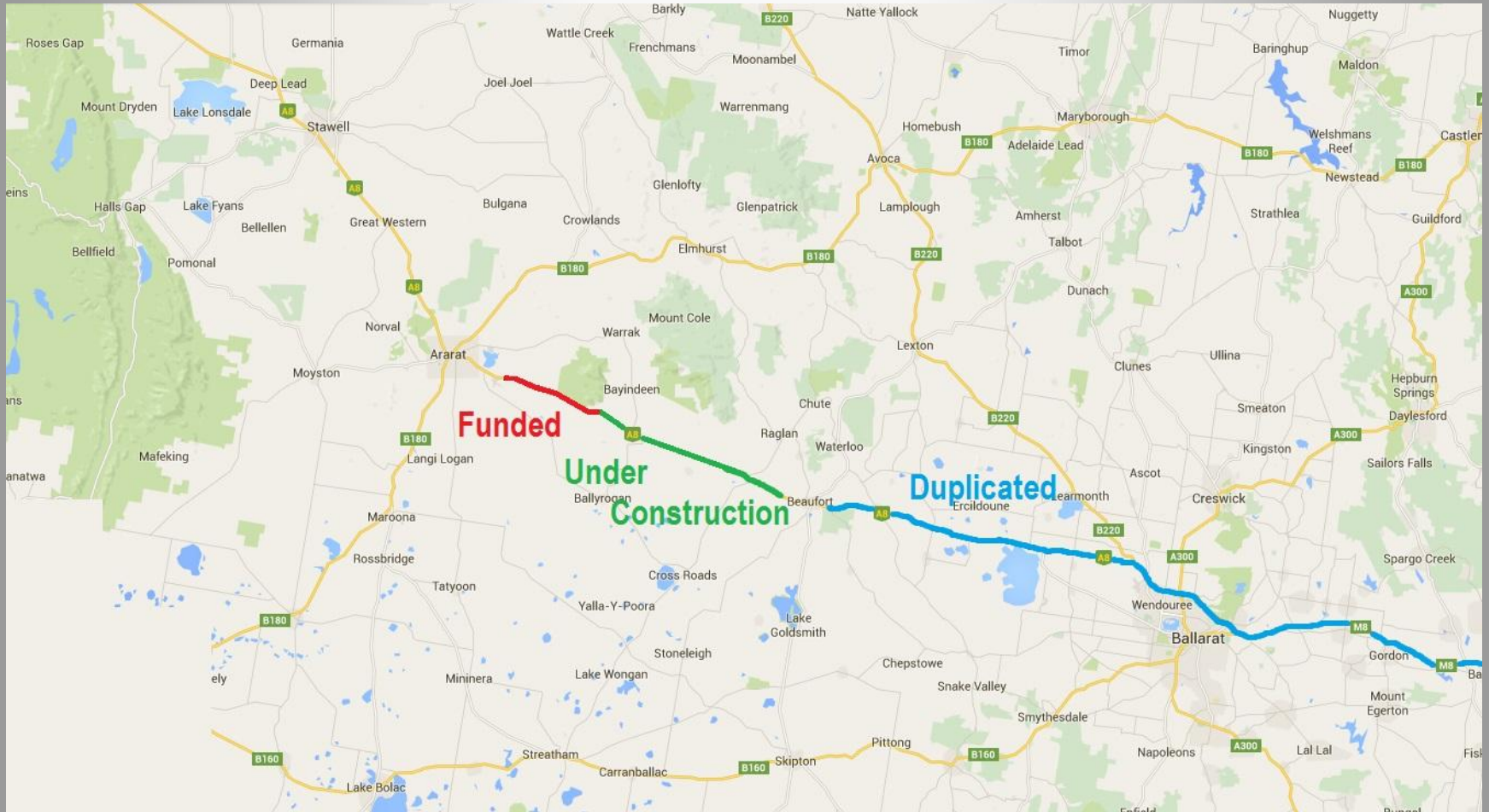


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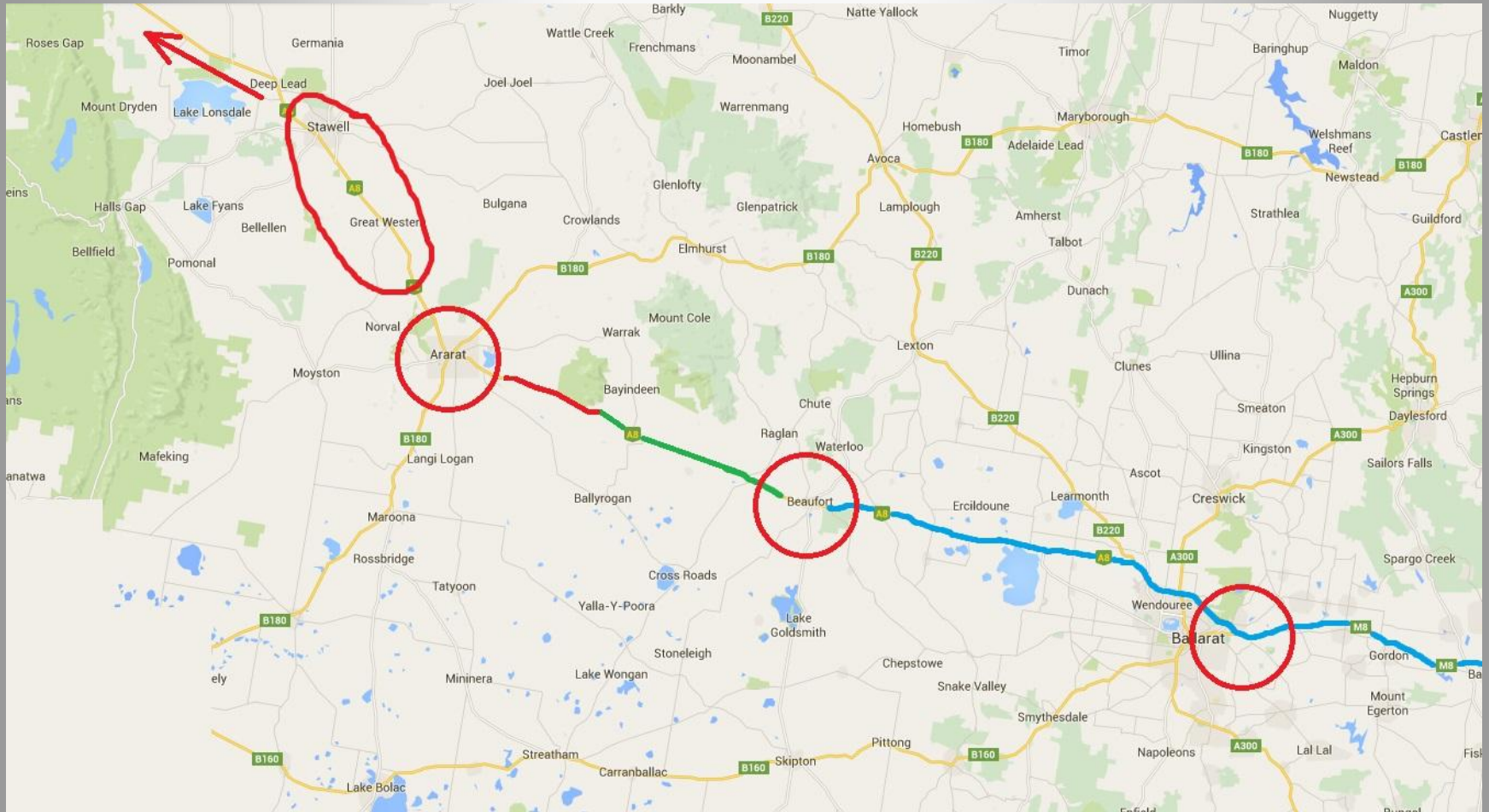




# Current priorities (west)



# Current priorities (west)









To save two minutes: The swathe left after the felling of old native trees (inset left) for the Western Freeway extension (far left). Below, left to right: Helen Lewers, Gavin Jamieson and Kato Vivian next to a mulched tree. Photos: Simon O'Dwyer

## Hundreds of giant

**Adam Carey**  
Transport Reporter

A planning blunder has led to the destruction of almost 900 towering old native trees after VicRoads severely underestimated the environmental impact of a highway project it is managing.

Many of the trees were classified as "very high conservation significance", but are being felled to shave two minutes off the travel time between Ararat and Beaufort, west of Ballarat, and make the rural highway safer.

The Western Highway is being

duplicated from Ballarat to Stawell, at a cost of \$662.8 million.

VicRoads estimated that no more than 221 "large old trees" would be lost when it widened the 41-kilometre highway corridor between Beaufort and Ararat, in an environmental effects statement.

It said a more detailed road design would likely reduce the actual number of large old trees lost to "less than" 221.

But the roads authority has conceded it now expects to cut down up to 885 large old-growth trees.

The figure is four times greater than VicRoads predicted, because

## trees felled in highway project blunder

the authority's environmental effects statement did not count "scattered" trees, which are not beside the road but are being felled all the same.

VicRoads came forward with its admission following sustained pressure from activist group WHAM (Western Highway Alternative Mindspace).

WHAM spokeswoman Helen Lewers said the natural environment had been scarred by the careless destruction of hundreds of beautiful old trees.

"When the 400-year-old Separation Tree [attacked by vandals in

Melbourne's Botanic Gardens] was lost it made all of Melbourne very sad, so how come it doesn't matter if nearly 900 like it are cut down?"

She said work on the project should have ceased once VicRoads realised the number of targeted trees far exceeded first estimates.

VicRoads chief executive John Merritt acknowledged the "discrepancy between the original estimate, which did not include scattered trees" and the true figure.

"Road safety is our utmost priority and roadside trees can be a hazard in run-off road accidents," Mr Merritt said.

A more detailed planning report, from 2014, identified 1635 large old trees that would be affected, and VicRoads had saved about 500 of those, he said.

"The chosen route provides the least environmental impact and VicRoads will plant over 12,000 new trees and 50,000 other plants when major construction is completed," he said.

The error prompted an intervention from Luke Donnellan, the Minister for Roads, who wrote to Ms Lewers to inform her that VicRoads was revising its design for the next highway section to be widened,

between Bunagar and Ararat.

This would include "narrowing the median width where possible" and using concrete and wire rope safety barriers to minimise the construction area.

Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber said both major parties shared the blame, having exempted VicRoads from the need to win permits for native vegetation clearing.

"When it comes to tree clearing, public authorities are some of the worst offenders, especially with the exemptions given to them back in the time of the Brumby government," he said.



How will we get there?

**DON'T STALL -  
FUND TO STAWELL**

**DUPLICATE THE WESTERN HIGHWAY**



# Some statistics



**11** FATALITIES



**49** PEOPLE SERIOUSLY INJURED



**1,500 TRUCKS PER DAY WEST OF BALLARAT**



**4,000 CARS PER DAY WEST OF BALLARAT**



# Media Launch



# Pollies





