

## 12.4 PICTON TOWN CENTRE TRANSPORT PLAN 2026 MASTER PLAN

**File Number:** 10619#707

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is to inform Council about the final draft, including the results of the community engagement process, undertaken for the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan 2026.
- It is recommended that:
  - The Master Plan for Picton Town Centre Transport Plan 2026 be adopted.
  - That all participants in the engagement process be thanked warmly for their contributions.

### REPORT

In January 2018, Council engaged consultants to peer review previous modelling and reviews of the Picton town centre transport network to help formalise a plan of how to manage the network in the short to medium term.

Picton town centre currently experiences traffic congestion in a few key locations, which is forecast to worsen in future years. The strategic context of the town, the surrounding topography and the existing transport networks result in a large proportion of through traffic travelling via the town centre. This through traffic is, in the main, travelling from Tahmoor, Thirlmere and smaller towns and villages to the south of Picton towards the Hume Motorway and Wollongong in the east.

Due to height & weight restriction on Prince Street, which provides the only other east-west connection, a high volume of heavy vehicles make up the traffic travelling through Picton affecting pedestrian amenity, safety and the general attractiveness of the town centre.

Considering the historical traffic concerns, and the prospect of land development exacerbating these issues in future, Council commenced analysing the transport network in 2017. This review identified a number of deficiencies in the transport network and various road infrastructure mitigation measures, including confirming the need for a new link between the southern villages to the Hume south of Picton, frequently referred to as a Picton Bypass.

A bypass would effectively relieve Picton town centre and provide a more direct route for heavy vehicles to access the state road network. Acknowledging that a Picton Bypass may take 10 years or more to be delivered, Council engaged Cardno to identify interim intersection upgrades in Picton town centre. Cardno's brief was to focus on relatively quickly implemented projects that could be delivered within 10 years, while avoiding the potential for redundant infrastructure when the bypass is delivered. As such, the study focused on a 2026 horizon as an interim step acknowledging separate project work in regard to more significant transport infrastructure.

A copy of the report and Master Plan are included as Appendices to this report. A summary of the recommendations from the Master Plan include:

- Prohibiting right turn movements at Menangle/Argyle Streets intersection
- Formalise a Colden Street 'bypass' from Menangle Street to Argyle Street via Colden and Margaret Streets (in lieu of prohibiting the right turn movement at the Argyle/Menangle Streets intersection)
- Move the existing Argyle/Menangle Streets pedestrian crossing further to the north
- Signalise the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection (noting Menangle Street is a State owned road)
- Upgrade Prince/Argyle Streets intersection to include dedicated turn lanes
- Safety upgrades to the Argyle Street/Barkers Lodge Road intersection

- Provision for a pedestrian crossing near the Picton Primary School via either a pedestrian crossing (noting requires closing one lane to through traffic) or signalling the adjacent Lumsdaine Street intersection.

The main focus of the design effort was Prince Street, which is shown to require improvements at both Argyle Street and Menangle Street intersections before 2026, to keep the network running smoothly. In parallel to the traffic modelling and design work, Cardno also undertook a Road Safety Audit of existing conditions at particular locations of interest within the study area resulting in numerous minor safety issues to be addressed across the town centre.

## Consultation

Numerous internal and external, formal and informal, engagement sessions have been held throughout the course of the project:

- Councillor workshops were held in October 2017, June 2018 and October 2018
- The draft Master Plan was presented to Council's Transport Advisory Committee in October 2018
- A community engagement was carried out in April 2019 with a number of formal sessions at Council as well as an informal session at a resident's premises on 24 April 2019 for a number of residents that reside near the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection proposed to be signalised.

The feedback through the engagement was generally positive with some specific concerns raised at a number of the projects. This mainly centred on the signalisation of the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection and, to a lesser degree, the upgrade of the Prince/Argyle Streets intersection.

At this meeting, a number of issues were raised by local residents including impacts on individual properties and driveways; street parking; access/egress; heritage and noise. The residents were advised at the meeting, and subsequently by email, that many of these concerns could not be fully addressed until fieldwork was complete and the 80% detailed design drawings were available.

Officers clearly stated up front that we fully support the need for a Picton Bypass and by no means does the signalisation of Prince Street, or the 2026 master plan, mitigate that support. The need and support for a Picton Bypass is clearly articulated as one of three critical infrastructure projects for Wollondilly which was adopted in Council's Asset Management Strategy (see pg 69 [http://www.wollondilly2033.com.au/assets/pdf/operationalplan/WSC\\_ResourcingStrategy2017\(2\).pdf](http://www.wollondilly2033.com.au/assets/pdf/operationalplan/WSC_ResourcingStrategy2017(2).pdf)).

It was noted, however, that a Picton Bypass, due to the scale of the project, is a 10 year implementation (at best) being led by the State Government and the 2026 Master Plan is a suite of works to manage the road network in the interim term (up to 2026). Our modelling shows that the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection falls to a Level of Service F(ailed) by 2021 and, anecdotally, we are already seeing congestion and resulting safety issues. As such, 'do nothing' is not an option. If the intersection goes to a 'F', queuing from the intersection will back up over the one lane Victoria Bridge on Prince Street with no mechanism to manage or control it.

We also explained why traffic signals were needed at this location to alleviate current and future traffic congestion at either end of Prince Street. We explained that other options, such as a roundabout at Menangle Street or complete closure of Prince Street, had been considered and were either impractical from a cost perspective or likely to exacerbate queuing and congestion issues elsewhere in the network (principally Picton town centre); have no positive outcome for pedestrian connectivity; or have significantly more heritage impact (ie. requiring land acquisition from the old Station Master's property).

A few residents complained that the consultation process had not been early enough. Up to this point, Council has concentrated on developing concepts to a reasonable confidence that they were feasible to implement and approvable by relevant authorities (noting Menangle Street is not a Council road) so there would be certainty that any proposals put out were deliverable. To have undertaken consultation with individual land owners before this point, would have inevitably raised more questions than answers.

Notwithstanding, we explained that, in addition to the informal session on 24 April 2019, a public exhibition of the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan (including the Prince Street works) had been held on the evening of Tuesday, 2 April 2019 which was widely publicised including via letter drop to local residents and well attended. Furthermore, public exhibition materials regarding the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan have been available on the Council website since 20 March 2019, also well visited, including the concept design drawings and supporting Traffic Study.

At this point, in principle approval for the need and the concept solution for the Prince Street signals has been granted by RMS (as the approval authority and subsequent asset owner of the project). However, detailed designs are ongoing and no expenditure for the construction of the project has been signed off by Council. We are still in the design phase where there is an opportunity for the design and scope to be adjusted to respond to affected residents' concerns, within reason.

However, we reiterate the point that we strongly support the Prince Street upgrade and consider it to be an important project for the whole of the Picton community. The works currently being designed are the culmination of extensive investigations to determine the most effective measures to keep traffic flowing around the town, pending the longer term solution of a Picton Bypass. We also pointed out that, as a State road, there is nothing stopping the State Government pursuing the signals themselves, however, it will be far better for the community if Council were the driver of the project.

Additionally, if unmanaged and the intersection reaches a 'F' Level of Service, the amenity for the adjacent land owners will be dramatically affected, again without any management option.

The traffic modelling that has been undertaken in this area strongly indicates that, without the intersection improvements at either end of Prince Street, queuing from these intersections will soon extend back over the one lane bridge causing much wider network impacts.

As the Prince Street project goes ahead, any adverse impacts on individual properties, as with all such Council projects, will be investigated and managed with the utmost sensitivity and with a view to minimising disruption and inconvenience to local residents and businesses.

The residents' group also requested additional modelling including restricting Prince Street (the entire length) to one way flow. This was carried out, however, resulted in poor performance throughout the network.

To close off the submissions received during the community engagement, Council officers published a list of Frequently Asked Questions including:

*What is the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan?*

The Wollondilly Local Government Area is set for significant population growth in the next 20-30 years, which is expected to increase traffic congestion in Picton. In anticipation of this, Council is developing a Picton Town Centre Transport Master Plan to improve traffic conditions in the Picton town centre. This includes significant upgrades to Prince Street, refinement to traffic flow through Colden and Margaret Streets, relocating the Argyle Street pedestrian crossing and general improvements around the town centre.

*Will there still be a Picton Bypass?*

The NSW Government has invested \$3million for planning and investigations into a Picton Bypass <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/illawarra/picton-bypass/index.html>. Activities carried out to date include traffic surveys, community consultation and preliminary environmental investigations. As construction on a bypass is likely to be some years away, it's important for us to manage the traffic congestion in Picton in the meantime. The measures we are currently looking at will alleviate the traffic stress and will continue to serve our local roads even after a Picton Bypass has been completed, such as the traffic lights at the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection.

*What sort of community engagement has been done for the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan?*

Council has worked on developing concepts that we were confident would meet RMS requirements (noting Menangle Street is not a Council road). Going through the full consultation process with individual land owners before now would have caused confusion. In April 2019, Council had an informal session with residents as well as a drop-in session which was well attended. Public exhibition materials regarding the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan are available on the Council website including the concept design drawings and supporting traffic study.

*Have traffic lights at Prince Street already been approved?*

In principal approval for the Prince Street signals has been granted by RMS as the approval authority and future owner of the lights. Detailed designs are yet to be developed. There is an opportunity for the design and scope to be adjusted to respond to residents' concerns.

*Has a roundabout or the closure of Prince Street been considered instead of traffic lights?*

Options such as a roundabout at Menangle Street or a complete closure of Prince Street have been considered and were found to be either impractical or likely to worsen congestion issues. Improved pedestrian connectivity was an important consideration in the plan.

*Has heritage been considered?*

The concepts being put forward to improve the safety conditions on Picton's roads take into consideration the town's heritage.

### **Financial Implications**

The strategic cost estimate for all the works is in the order of \$5-6 million. However, as the projects are separable, they can be pursued in a staged manner over time. High priority is the Prince Street intersections and the relocation of the pedestrian crossing.

We note that the Prince Street intersections are listed in Council's adopted Development Contributions Plan and grant funding has been secured for the pedestrian crossing relocation.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Picton Town Centre Transport Plan 2026** 
2. **Detailed Design Report - Prince Street Intersection Upgrades** 

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Master Plan for Picton Town Centre Transport Plan 2026 be adopted.
2. That all participants in the engagement process be thanked warmly for their contributions.
3. That Council continues to advocate for Picton Bypass.