12 MANAGEMENT AND PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

12.1 PICTON TOWN CENTRE TRANSPORT PLAN 2026 - PROPOSED SIGNALISATION OF MENANGLE/PRINCE STREETS INTERSECTION

File Number: **10619#784**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is to inform Council about design options for the upgrade of the Prince and Menangle Streets intersection, which is a high priority identified in the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan 2026, adopted at Council's Meeting of 19 August 2019.
- It is recommended that Council pursue the detailed design of signalisation of the Prince and Menangle Streets Intersection.

REPORT

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 in the morning (AM) and returning back to these locations in the afternoon/evening (PM).

Due to height and weight restrictions 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 reconfirming the need for a new link between the southern villages to the Hume Motorway south of Picton, historically referred to as a 'Picton Bypass'.

A bypass would effectively relieve the Picton Town Centre and provide a more direct route for heavy vehicles to access the State road network. Acknowledging that a Picton Bypass is a significant, challenging project that may take 10 years or more to be delivered, Council engaged specialist transport consultants to identify interim transport upgrades in and around the Picton Town Centre.

The engagement 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.

It is noted that Council 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 page 69 http://www.wollondilly2033.com.au/assets/pdf/operationalplan/WSC_ResourcingStrategy2017(2).pdf

The 2026 study and Master Plan identified the performance of Prince Street as crucial for the overall success of the town centre network. Modelling shows that the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection falls to a Level of Service F by 2021 and, anecdotally, we are already seeing congestion and resulting safety issues.

As such, a 'do nothing' is not an option. If the intersection goes to an '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, leading to broader network failure.

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 Master Plan recommends:

- Signalisation of the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection (noting Menangle Street is a State owned road)

We note the overall Master Plan was adopted at the August Council Meeting with specific reference that the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection be further discussed and reported. As such, this one project is the topic of this report.

A number of strategic design options to alleviate the poor performance of the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection have been assessed in the development of the overall Master Plan which include:

Reducing Prince Street to One-Way Flow

Following a suggestion received at a public consultation event, Council modelled a one-way option on Prince Street (eastbound). Upon detailed analysis, it was decided not to pursue this option due to the following factors:

- The Prince Street one-way option introduces significant additional traffic into Picton Town Centre, particularly during peak periods, which runs contrary to the holistic objectives of the Picton Town Centre Transport Plan.
- The additional town centre traffic requires a significant upgrade to Menangle/Argyle Streets intersection which would further restrict movements at this intersection and result in loss of on-street parking and amenity.
- The traffic modelling does not take into account the high proportion of heavy vehicles using this route or the difficulty that heavy vehicles would have negotiating the constrained geometry of the intersection to make the left turn into Argyle Street. When these factors are applied, the intersection performance would fail during peak times.

Roundabout

A roundabout was considered early in the Master Plan study and not pursued:

- Whilst signalisation introduces safe pedestrian crossing facilities, a roundabout does nothing for pedestrian connectivity across roads in an area that is close to our biggest public transport option in the Shire, being Picton Train Station, which we should be encouraging as much active transport connectivity as possible.
- It is likely we will need to acquire more land/private property, namely the old Station Master's House, and do a boundary adjustment and possibly have to remove the significant tree (currently in that property).
- Aesthetically, a roundabout is way more obtrusive than lights and not a pleasant gateway into Picton (ie example is the 'Boral' roundabout further east on Picton Road).
- Heritage-wise, due to the larger footprint, would have much greater impact to adjacent (informal) heritage items such as old kerb and gutter.
- Cost-wise, on top of the likely property acquisition, there are significantly more works involved so significantly more construction costs.
- A roundabout would have no positive outcome for on-street parking (raised as an issue by adjacent residents with the proposed signalisation).
- RMS would need to give concurrence and approval, noting they have given in-principle support to signalisation.
- The design will be difficult, required to address sight lines (including night time), speed and heavy vehicle access.
- The potential subsequent upgrade to a roundabout is a multi-lane roundabout, signalised roundabout or complete removal and replacement with signals with all of these exacerbating the negatives or negating any perceived advantage over other options.

High Capacity Upgrade

Essentially, going back to the drawing board and coming up with a strategy of how the road layout should be, potentially leading to realignment of roads or new links, is not recommended:

- There is only so much value to be gained from increasing the capacity of this intersection. The one lane bridge will continue to act as a key capacity constraint in the network.
- Significantly more property acquisition likely to be required, greater impact to heritage and amenity.
- Cost is likely to be prohibitive, with no indication to date that RMS are willing to contribute funding.
- Approval and delivery timeframes significantly extended, defeating the purpose of trying to deliver quickly and manage the network prior to the modelled issues occurring in 2021.
- Likely to be even greater local opposition from residents due to visual impacts and footprint.
- Major upgrade of this intersection may undermine or replace the case for the Picton Bypass.

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, October 2018 and August 2019.
- 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.
- The Master Plan was reported to and adopted by Council in August 2019.

Through the Master Plan community engagement, feedback was generally positive with some specific concerns raised at the proposed signalisation of the Prince/Menangle Streets intersection.

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 would be worked through with the detailed design.

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, we reiterate the point that we strongly support the Prince Street signalisation 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, there is an opportunity for the detailed design to be adjusted to respond to affected residents' concerns, within reason.

Financial Implications

The strategic cost estimate for the signalisation is in the order of $1.5m, noting that the Prince Street intersections are listed in Council's adopted Development Contributions Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

RECOMMENDATION

That Council pursue the detailed design of signalisation of the Prince and Menangle Streets Intersection.