



The Hon Michael McCormack MP

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for Riverina

The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Federal Member for Gippsland



The Hon Jacinta Allan MP

Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure
Victorian Member for Bendigo East

The Hon Jane Garrett MP

Victorian Member for Eastern Victoria

MEDIA RELEASE

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**EARLY COMPLETION FOR STRATFORD'S NEW RAIL BRIDGE
OVER THE AVON RIVER**

The new rail bridge over the Avon River in Stratford is on track to be completed ahead of schedule, with trains able to travel on the new structure from December.

The Avon River Bridge is part of the Gippsland Line Upgrade, which will allow more frequent and reliable services for passengers by duplicating track, extending the Morwell crossing loop, upgrading level crossings and signalling and adding second platforms at four stations along the line.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Michael McCormack said trains would begin using the new bridge in December following an upcoming construction blitz to get it ready for operation.

"It's fantastic that works on the new bridge are finishing early, especially given crews have worked under modified conditions for most of the year," the Deputy Prime Minister said.

"We know how vital this is for our regional communities reeling from the impacts of COVID-19, which is why we will continue to deliver projects like this under our record \$110 billion infrastructure pipeline which supports local jobs and economies right across the country at a time when it is needed most."

The Hon Michael McCormack MP

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During the construction blitz from Saturday 28 November until Sunday 6 December, crews will work around 3,500 hours to complete the track and signalling works to connect the new bridge to the rail line, remove sections of old railway track and sleepers and undertake landscaping works.

Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure Jacinta Allan said more than 1,100 tonnes of concrete had been poured to form the bridge deck and more than 15,000 cubic metres of earth was moved to make its new embankments.

“The past few months have seen a massive effort to bring this new bridge to life, with plenty of involvement from local workers and suppliers,” Ms Allan said.

“Local contractors have worked hard on the project, and we’re focused on continuing to support the local economies of Stratford and Gippsland through the Gippsland Line Upgrade.”

Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester said the McAlister Street level crossing would continue to be upgraded to feature boom gates and a pedestrian crossing, improving safety for passengers, motorists and pedestrians.

“Trains will be able to travel up to 90km/h on the new bridge, a vast improvement on the 10km/h limit on the existing bridge,” Minister Chester said.

“The Avon River Bridge has given Gippsland more than 130 years of service, and this is a real chance to celebrate the bridge and its place in the region’s history.”

As the completion date rolls nearer, the final pairs of massive 60-tonne beams will be lifted into place and the walls attached.

State Member for Eastern Victoria Jane Garrett welcomed the inclusion of a mural on the wall of the new bridge, which local artist Ray Thomas will start painting later this year.

“Locals have been given a sneak peek of the fantastic mural that represents so much of our region’s history and heritage – I can’t wait to see it go up on the bridge,” Ms Garrett said.

Coaches will replace Bairnsdale trains for all or part of the journey from Saturday 28 November to Sunday 6 December while works are underway to get the new bridge ready for use.

Passengers are asked to plan their journeys and book tickets in advance, as coach departure times may vary. Passengers can find out if they are affected at bigbuild.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 800 007.

The new rail bridge over the Avon River is being delivered as part of the Regional Rail Revival program.

The project is jointly funded with the Australian Government committing \$79.45 million and the Victorian Government \$7.55 million. Construction on other sections of the Gippsland Line Upgrade will continue until late 2022.

Ends.

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