

Advocacy Priority:

Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program



Overview

Strathbogie Shire Council is seeking funding support for its Bridge and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program, targeting a staged upgrade of critical bridge and watercourse structures across the Shire. These structures are vital connectors for agricultural freight, emergency services, and everyday community access. However many are nearing the end of their serviceable life and require urgent attention.

Council is committed to leading delivery of this program and is calling on state and federal government partners to co-invest in infrastructure that will:

- Enhance safety for all road users
- Strengthen rural resilience
- Unlock future economic opportunities for the region.

The Problem

Many of the Shire's bridges are ageing, structurally deteriorating, or load limited. Council has 132 bridges and over 300 culverts, with limited understanding of their current condition. This impacts not only the safety of road users but also compromises access for freight operators, emergency services, and residents. Some structures have low flood resilience, leading to frequent closures during extreme weather, and further isolating communities when it matters most.

These constraints add cost and risks for local industries, especially agriculture, and limit the potential for growth in tourism and regional development. Without investment, the gap between infrastructure performance and community needs will continue to widen. Council is currently sourcing up to date condition data on its bridge and as many culverts as possible.

The Solution

The Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program will deliver targeted upgrade of the region's most critical bridges through a mix of strengthening works, full replacements, and flood-proofing measures. Wherever appropriate, timber bridges will be replaced with modern, low-maintenance structures to improve lifespan and reliability.

Council will lead planning and delivery, coordinate stakeholder engagement, and contribute in-kind through data, design, and project management expertise. To deliver this ambitious program, Council is seeking \$1M in capital funding per year for 4 years from both state and federal governments, as well as access to technical advisory services for complex sites.



The Benefit

Investing in rural bridges delivers economic dividends. Renewed bridges reduce travel times and transport costs for local producers, freight carriers, and small businesses. They support access to wineries, farmgate operations, nature-based attractions, and local events, building resilience and reliability in our tourism economy. Future investment in the region depends on the strength of our transport networks. This program will give businesses the confidence to grow, expand, and invest in Strathbogie Shire.

Upgraded bridges reconnect people and services. Rural towns rely on these structures for everything from school bus routes to ambulance access.

Improving bridge infrastructure helps reduce isolation, enhances liveability, and increases equity for smaller, remote communities. Better bridges also support regional identity, safety, and peace of mind for residents who rely on them every day.

Modern bridge designs offer greater flood resilience and can reduce environmental impacts through low-impact foundations and sustainable materials. Replacing vulnerable crossings with more resilient structures will help keep roads open longer during storms and natural disasters, reducing costly repairs and emergency detours. Active consideration of site-specific environmental and cultural factors ensures the program aligns with long-term sustainability and planning objectives.

Conclusion

Strathbogie Shire is *Investing in Tomorrow*; but our businesses, residents, and emergency services need safe and reliable access to stay connected and thrive.

The Connecting Communities: Bridges and Drainage Infrastructure Renewal Program is a shovel-ready, region-shaping initiative that will deliver lasting safety, productivity and resilience. By addressing critical infrastructure gaps now, this program will secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits for our region.

Council stands ready to partner with state and federal governments to make this program a reality. Funding this program is not just about fixing bridges; it is about investing in safer, stronger, and more connected communities for tomorrow.