

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP
Minister for Public Transport
Minister for Roads and Road Safety



Monday, 10 May 2021

GETTING LYDIARD STREET BACK OPEN AGAIN

The Lydiard Street rail crossing in Ballarat will be upgraded and reopened following detailed development design that will ensure the safety and reliability of the crossing.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/2022* will invest \$10.5 million to reopen the Lydiard Street level crossing safely, with a half-boom barrier crossing and upgraded signaling system.

While a final design for the upgraded crossing is being developed, work is already underway for a temporary solution to reopen Lydiard Street that will involve half boom barriers being connected to the older manual signaling system.

This project will not only reopen the road – once complete, it will permanently improve the crossing with the existing signaling system replaced with new modern technology. This upgrade will make travelling this stretch of road easier and safer for everyone by automating the opening and closing of the crossing and reducing the amount of time the crossing is closed to traffic.

Once the final design for the crossing has been completed and approved, it will be shared with the community ahead of works getting underway in the second half of 2021.

The upgrade will pay tribute to the rich history of Ballarat, with V/Line, the Department of Transport and a specialist heritage advisor working closely with Heritage Victoria on final design for the crossing.

Reopening the crossing to traffic will ensure that locals and visitors alike can once again use Lydiard Street – one of Ballarat's most important north-south connections – to access local businesses, jobs, education, sports and social events.

These upgrades are the outcome of a wide range of specialist assessments and investigations following an incident involving the crossing in May 2020.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Public Transport Ben Carroll

"We know that the closure of this crossing has been incredibly frustrating and the project team will now work as hard as they can to get Lydiard Street open quickly and safely."

"These upgrades will ensure that the crossing is in line with modern safety standards, while still recognising the heritage that is intrinsic to Ballarat."

Quotes attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

"We thank the community for its patience while we worked towards a safe solution for the Lydiard Street crossing."

"With detailed plans now in place, we will continue to move forward and get Lydiard Street open as soon as possible."



\$10.5m funding to reopen Ballarat rail crossing where train crash closed Lydiard Street

ABC Ballarat / By Jackson Peck

Posted Mon 10 May 2021 at 4:55pm



The Lydiard Street gates have been closed for nearly a year. (ABC Ballarat: Caitlin Bewley)

Ballarat's replica heritage Lydiard Street gates are set to go, with the state government announcing a new fully automated level crossing system will be installed by mid-next year.

The crossing, next to Ballarat train station, has been closed for almost 12 months after a runaway train crashed through the wooden gates — replicas of those from the 1800s — in May last year.

During a visit to Ballarat, Public Transport Minister Ben Carroll said the \$10.5 million investment would go towards a temporary "half-boom barrier crossing" that would allow the road to reopen within six months.

A new system will be built by mid-2022.

'Safety needs to come first'

Mr Carroll said work would begin immediately on the temporary solution so the road could be reopened as soon as possible — hopefully by September or October.

Key points:

- A heritage level crossing system will be replaced by an automated system within a year
- A temporary "half boom barrier crossing" will be installed within six months to allow Lydiard Street to reopen
- A councillor says she's "very disappointed" the old-style gates won't be incorporated into the new system

"We know Lydiard Street is a very important historical precinct, not only for here in Ballarat but essentially the whole Victorian railway," he said.

"It goes back to the 1860s, but unfortunately too a lot of the signalling and operation goes back to the 1860s as well."

Currently, the gate system is operated manually from Melbourne.

Mr Carroll said while preserving heritage was important, the old-style gates could not be replaced and a new system must be built.

"The automated system will bring Lydiard Street in line with every other signalling system that we have throughout our state," he said.

"Safety needs to come first and foremost but we're equally mindful of the heritage of Ballarat — that's why I'm very pleased to say we have engaged heritage consultants."

"We're working very hard to ensure that those gates still remain part of the Ballarat precinct and feel incorporated and that the community can still pay homage to that unique system that's operated here for so long."



Public Transport and Roads Minister Ben Carroll made the announcement with Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison. (ABC Ballarat: Jackson Peck)

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'Very disappointed'

Ballarat City councillor Samantha McIntosh said it had taken the state government too long to come up with a temporary solution.

"It's a shame that this interim solution couldn't have happened a year ago. It's been a dreadful shame that our community hasn't had access to Lydiard Street."

Cr McIntosh said she was "very disappointed" the state government was walking away from integrating the old-style gates into the new system.

"Our community want the gates protected, they want to see the gates operating in some form," she said.

"The issue was about the fault of the train, not the fault of the gates. I certainly believe over the time the focus has been shifted to be on the gates — not for the right reasons."

Nick Foa from the Department of Transport said the old gates, which took two minutes to open and had to be monitored via CCTV in Melbourne, were responsible for 60 per cent of delays on the Ballarat line.