



Bells Line of Road \$100m Funding Survey

November 2023

Bells Line of Road Business Council Inc.

Image: Destination NSW

www.greaterbellslineofroad.com.au





About BLORBC

WHO WE ARE

The BLORBC is an NFP business organisation with the common goal to support local businesses and their local economy in the Bells Line of Road region.

OUR PURPOSE

- **PROVIDING** information, advice and support to local businesses on matters of concern.
- **LOBBYING** Local, State and Federal Government to address the needs of small businesses on Bells Line of Road.
- **PROMOTING** the contribution of small business to the good health and wellbeing of residents west of the Hawkesbury River through the supply of long-term sustainable employment.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

- **ADVOCACY & SUPPORT** - We provide a well-researched and evidenced understanding of the issues, challenges and opportunities relevant to the region. We are highly connected across business, government, industry and agriculture.
- **POLICY & DELIVERY** - We are experienced in advocating, influencing and delivering change to advance business, community & environment. We advocate, influence and deliver policies of tangible outcome to drive economic growth.
- **ENGAGEMENT & ACTION** - We work to create opportunities to invest, work, live and visit our local region. We advocate and voice the contribution of small business to good health & wellbeing of residents in the region. We advocate for marketing, advertising and tourism engagement opportunities that directly promote positive growth outcomes for the local economy & environment.

MEMBERS

Our exclusive membership forums allow members the opportunity to engage with key government ministers including our elected State & Federal Ministers.

Our membership represents the engaged business people of the Bells Line of Road region offering a dynamic pool of business connections. Memberships are open to corporates, small business, micro businesses, employees and students.

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Executive Summary

Bells Line Road is one of the most dangerous stretches of road in the country. The steep, winding road has an accident rate higher than the state average and was heavily impacted by extreme weather events in recent years. It is an important arterial route for primary producers and tourists, with weekend traffic around 60 per cent higher than weekday traffic. (Source: ABC news 18 January 2023)

In 2023 the Australian Government announced a \$100 million project to be jointly funded by the Federal and State governments in an 80/20 funding split.

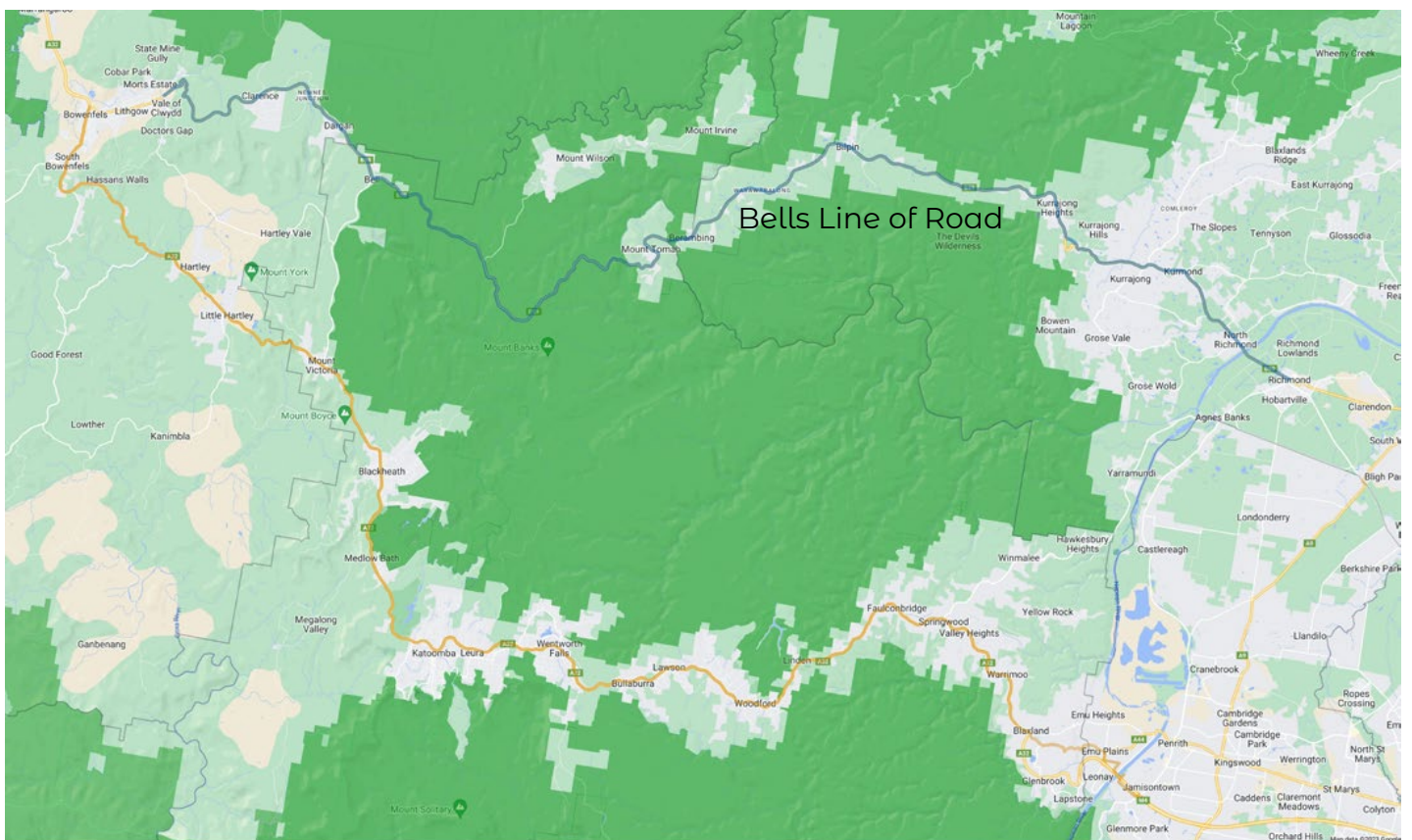
BLOR Business Council surveyed users of the road and found the following priorities for safety upgrades:

- Concrete dividers are needed along the road from Range Hill Trail to Mistake Ravine Corner.
- Turning lanes at Pinedale Place Kurrajong Heights, Kurts Road Bilpin; and Johnson Road (eastbound) Bilpin and Bilpin Fruit Bowl (eastbound). Various commercial businesses are located on these roads which increases
- the frequency of turning traffic and the number of car accidents.
- Emergency evacuation areas (Neighborhood Safer Places) in the event of bushfire.
- Smart signs (signs that are solar powered and flash at dusk to alert motorists to koala, wombats, and wallabies).
- Smart signs installed at Turpentine Tree Kurrajong Heights and The Hive Berambing alerting motorists to heavy traffic flows on weekends and public holidays during fruit picking season. See the village of Young NSW for examples of these sign usage.

Immediate attention to these issues will improve community safety and wellbeing

Bells Line of Road (BLOR)

BLOR is a major arterial road connecting Sydney with the Central West, starting at North Richmond and terminating at Lithgow. It provides a scenic alternative to the Great Western Highway. A key driver of the local economy of BLOR is tourism. The road is used by an increasing number of visitors from Sydney.



Bells Line of Road traverses three LGA areas on its route across the Blue Mountains.

Hawkesbury

Blue Mountains

Lithgow

Background

Bells Line of Road \$100m Funding Survey

In January 2023, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese along with the NSW Government announced a combined \$100 million funding to upgrade Bells Line of Road. The Prime Minister stated that *“Bells Line of Road is an important part of the history of Greater Western Sydney, and remains a vital piece of infrastructure for locals, transport operators, and tourists exploring the beautiful Blue Mountains.”*

Following the PM’s announcement Bells Line of Road Business Council (BLORBC) initiated the BLOR \$100m Funding Survey to capture community views about road issues and where funding should be directed. The survey was conducted between February and August 2023 and received over 150 responses. The survey was promoted via local community Facebook groups, websites, direct email and more widely via local media.

A majority of respondents were local residents and frequent road users. The following report outlines key statistics and areas where the community’s voice has identified common issues and solutions to improve the safety of all users of BLOR.

Survey Insights

77%

find the road
difficult to drive

93%

say the road is
unsatisfactory
compared to
Great Western
Highway

85%

worry about
pulling out or
stopping safely

“

More overtaking lanes required, better pull over areas in certain sections, as some parts there is absolutely no where to pull over.

”

78%
feel unsafe
driving the
road

57%
have suffered
vehicle
damage

89%
have complained,
(or know
someone who
has) about road
accidents

“

I refuse to drive further than my house because of the condition of the road, it is unsafe and has cost me thousands in damage to my vehicles.

”

74%

believe roadside amenities are unsatisfactory

64%

find it hard to identify local businesses and stop in time

73%

say road repairs affects local economy

66%

support more public roadside amenities

“

The signage that is allowed for businesses is not adequate enough so tourists will literally stop in the middle of the road when they see a business they would like to attend causing more accidents & traffic & just being generally dangerous.

”

79%

support the creation
of a **dedicated
tourist information
centre**

“*I run a tourism business and often receive complaints from guests about lack of access/signage/safe parking for key view spots.*”

64%

believe removal of roadside hazards untimely

83%

believe maintenance is untimely

only 3% find assistance for road maintenance issues easily accessible

“

Road repairs that are made deteriorate again very quickly. Materials used to patch pot holes consistently break up leaving an even bigger road hazard.


”

The time it takes to make repairs to road damage is extremely poor.



93%

**support the creation
of Neighborhood
Safer Places (NSPs)
for use in bushfire
emergencies**

A koala is shown clinging to a tree branch, looking directly at the camera. The background is a dense network of tree branches and leaves, slightly out of focus. The overall tone is natural and somewhat somber.

93%

support improved
wildlife signage
and crossings to
increase safety of
native fauna

“

*koalas are crossing and being murdered
and there is no signage...*

”

Funding Solutions

Road Safety Upgrades

Anonymous comments from respondents along with community research was combined to create a list of priority issues and solutions.

1 Road Safety Upgrades: Priorities

- Concrete dividers are needed along the road from Range Hill Trail to Mistake Ravine Corner.
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Locations: *A list of key locations identified by survey respondents for road & facility improvements has been included in [Appendix 1](#) on page XXX of this document.*

Funding Solutions

Tourism & Local Economy, Wildlife & Environment

Better management of tourism traffic, increased amenities, signage and dedicated scenic pullover areas will increase road safety for everyone.

2 Tourism and Local Economy

- Better tourism information points and creation of a **dedicated tourism information centre**.
- Improved tourist amenities.
- Reopening of the Berambing picnic area for tourist use and sealing of the adjacent pull over area.
- Coordinated promotion of BLOR as a safe and desirable tourism route.
- More visible business signage.
- Improved public carpark capacity in Bilpin village.
- Dedicated tourism rest stop / pull overs in key locations.

3 Wildlife Safety Measures

- Improved signage to increase road user awareness of wildlife crossing the road.
- Create dedicated wildlife crossing points to improve safety of native fauna.

Funding Solutions

Truck Management and Road Safety

Many respondents raised issues regarding heavy truck use of BLOR causing road damage and serious accidents. The following issues and solutions were identified.

4 Trucks Management and Road Safety

- Diversion of heavy trucks away from BLOR onto more suitable roads such as the Great Western Highway.
- Reduced truck speed limits on steep s-bends at Mt Tomah
- Average speed monitoring for trucks on Bellbird Hill descent and Mt Tomah.
- Additional slow vehicle pull off lanes, particularly between Mt Tomah and Bell.
- Road widening and verge widening to increase road width to safely manage large truck traffic.
- Extra police presence to enforce truck speed limits and safety.
- Noise pollution cameras.

Priority needs of BLOR communities

The survey identified the following priority needs for communities along Bells Line Road from Kurrajong Heights to Dargan, including Bilpin, Berambing, Mt Tomah, Bell, Mt Wilson, and Clarence.

5 Establish Dedicated Ambulance Station

BLOR has a road accident rate higher than the state average. An ambulance station is needed to improve medical response times and reduce trauma on RFS volunteers as first responders to serious accidents. Much of BLOR traverses remote areas, where ambulances are located a significant distance away in either Lithgow or Richmond.

7 Reopen the Bilpin to Mount Irvine Road

Blue Mountains City Council completed a scoping study into this project. The road needs to reopen as an alternate access route when BLOR is closed due to disasters or road accidents and as a tourist scenic drive.

6 Build Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs)

4 years after the 2019 bushfire, there are no NSPs along BLOR to the east of Bell. Recommendation 17 of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020 (implementation of NSPs in remote areas) was adopted by the NSW Government. Mt Tomah RFS station was a location identified by the inquiry for NSP upgrades.

8 Installation of Fire Danger Rating Signs

No fire danger rating signs exist along BLOR between Berambing and North Richmond. This section of BLOR is 33km and includes highly populated areas. Community and tourist awareness of fire danger ratings is critical for preventing bushfires.

Priority needs of BLOR communities

The survey identified the following priority needs for communities along Bells Line Road from Kurrajong Heights to Dargan, including Bilpin, Berambing, Mt Tomah, Bell, Mt Wilson, and Clarence.

9 Roadside Water Storage for better disaster management & mitigation

A significant issue identified by the community along BLOR during the 2019 bushfire was that there was not enough easily accessible water points for emergency services to fill up from. Houses were destroyed without having any water applied. When firefighting trucks can refill faster they can put out more fire and save more homes.

Water storage has successfully been installed at the Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club and at Mt Tomah.

Additional roadside water storage is needed in other areas between these location to improved bushfire mitigation and management as well as community and visitor safety.

10 Improve Mobile Phone Reception

Fire prone areas and communities along BLOR continue to experience poor to non-existent phone coverage. This is particularly the case for areas west of the Bilpin Metro Petrol Station to Mt Tomah and Bell to Mt Tomah.

A significant issue identified by residents during the 2019 fire was poor communication. Many residents did not receive emergency text / phonecalls. Fixing reception blackspots is critical for community, and visitor safety.

Macquarie MP Susan Templeman stated in 2021 the *“the case for a blackspot solution at Mt Tomah is overwhelming...there is simply no mobile coverage for much of the area and along Bells Line of Road.”*



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BUSINESS COUNCIL

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