



Highway delays could cost lives

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The State Government's decision to delay much-needed upgrades to Great Eastern Highway has been criticised as one which could cost lives.

In its mid-year financial projections, the Government announced completion dates for four State-funded road upgrade projects would be pushed back between one and two years. This includes the construction of 15 passing lanes on Great Eastern Highway between Southern Cross and Kalgoorlie-Boulder, to which the Barnett Government committed \$38 million prior to this year's State election.

In its mid-year review, the Government said deferring the four road upgrade projects would result in savings of \$87.5m over the next

four years.

But the decision has been criticised by Mining and Pastoral MLC Stephen Dawson, who says drivers cannot afford another year without upgrades on the dangerous stretch of road. "It is a real concern," Mr Dawson said.

"Particularly over the festive season, where we do see a spike in road accidents, it just makes the issue glaringly obvious that that road needs to be fixed.

"There could be more families who could lose a loved one based on this road being pushed back a year.

"The longer the road continues in the same state it's in now, the more likely there will be accidents and families affected.

"I just look at the waterfront project in Perth and think it's the wrong priorities, we're missing out on a much needed road that will help safety but also the Goldfields economy, while Perth is getting this waterfront development that no one wants or needs."

There have been a string of serious crashes in the past year, while truck rollovers have led to closures of the highway on several occasions, with one incident causing delays for nearly 18 hours after a chemical spill two days before Christmas last year.

With ongoing concerns regarding the condition of the road, Kalgoorlie MLA Wendy Duncan called passing lanes an "excellent start" but said the dangerous highway needed more. "I think it is something we still need to do a lot of work on," Ms Duncan said.

"It's interesting the number of people who tell me about some quite terrifying experiences they've had on that road, particularly when you're passing large equipment or convoys, and the edge of the gravel's really sharp or cutaway, and it's actually quite dangerous to pull over to allow them to pass."



Delayed: Eyre MLA Graham Jacobs, Kalgoorlie candidate Melissa Price and Premier Colin Barnett campaigning on Great Eastern Highway in February.