



2004–05 **Victorian Budget Overview**  
Growing Victoria Together

**Putting Families First**

# Contents

The Secretary  
Department of Treasury and Finance  
1 Treasury Place  
Melbourne Victoria 3002  
Australia

Telephone: +61 3 9651 5111  
Facsimile: +61 3 9651 5298  
Website: [www.budget.vic.gov.au](http://www.budget.vic.gov.au)

2004-05 Budget Paper set includes:  
2004-05 Victorian Budget – Your guide to the structure of the State Budget Papers  
Budget Paper No. 1 – Treasurer's Speech  
Budget Paper No. 2 – Strategy and Outlook  
Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery  
Budget Paper No. 4 – Statement of Finances (Incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No. 3)  
Budget Overview

Published by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

© State of Victoria 2004

This book is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act.

ISSN 1 440-6969

Published May 2004 by authority



Treasurer's Message	<b>3</b>
Achievements to Date	<b>4</b>
2004-05 Budget Highlights	<b>5</b>
The Victorian Economy	<b>8</b>
Budget at a Glance	<b>9</b>
Building Victoria's Infrastructure	<b>11</b>
A Budget for all Victorians	<b>12</b>
Putting Families First	<b>14</b>
<i>Growing Victoria Together</i>	
High quality accessible health and community services	<b>16</b>
Valuing and investing in lifelong education	<b>18</b>
Safe streets, homes and workplaces	<b>19</b>
Growing and linking all of Victoria	<b>20</b>
More jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria	<b>21</b>
Protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development	<b>22</b>
Building cohesive communities and reducing inequalities	<b>23</b>
Promoting rights and respecting diversity	<b>24</b>

# Treasurer's Message



*The Government is providing a sound foundation to ensure Victoria's strong economic performance continues in the challenging times ahead, while significantly improving education, health and community services across the State and delivering a major new package of support for Victorian families.*

Over the last five years, Victoria has outperformed the national economy with productivity and business investment growing strongly, while our unemployment rate has been below the national average for almost four years.

Despite continued global uncertainties, the Victorian economy is forecast to grow by 3.25 per cent in 2004-05 and employment growth is expected to remain strong.

The 2004-05 Budget positions Victoria as a diverse and internationally competitive economy to ensure our strong economic performance continues.

The budget includes initiatives designed to boost Victoria's economic performance as part of the Government's April 2004 Economic Statement, *Victoria: Leading the Way*, including a further reduction in business costs through a substantial cut in land tax and average Workcover premiums.

The budget delivers *Putting Families First*, a major new package of support for Victorian families. *Putting Families First* includes a new *Caring for Children* initiative to improve children's health services and protect and care for vulnerable children. Families will also benefit from greater access to bulk-billed medical services and free dental treatment.

Families will receive more assistance to purchase their first home with an additional \$5 000 *First Home Bonus*. This will provide substantial relief for 26 000 Victorians with the purchase of their first home.

The Government will also increase the supply of affordable housing across the State.

The Government is undertaking the most significant reform of State government concessions in a decade to ensure a fairer, better targeted system and redirect benefits to Victorians most in need of support. Parents will receive increased assistance with schooling costs, and there will be extended public transport concessions and increased local government rates concessions.

The budget continues the Government's strong record of investment in regional Victoria, directing substantial funds into schools, health and aged care services, water supply and irrigation systems, and initiatives to drive investment, jobs and population growth.

The Government continues to invest in education as a top priority. The budget provides significant new resources for building and upgrading schools, creating new specialist facilities in secondary schools and improving vocational education and training programs.

The Government is rebuilding Victoria's health services – treating more patients, reducing waiting lists and investing in vital new technology and equipment. The budget includes a major boost for dental health services, improvements to aged care facilities, a new cancer treatment centre in the Latrobe Valley, a new elective surgery centre in Melbourne and further funding to ensure Victorian hospitals have access to world-class medical technology.

The budget delivers strong backing to entrench Victoria's position as the safest State in Australia, including a major boost in operational resources for the Victoria Police and an increase in funding for road safety.

This budget continues our investment in modern, efficient transport, including an outer-metropolitan arterial road upgrade program, improvements to key regional roads and funding for the Geelong Western Bypass. In public transport, new partnership agreements will deliver additional staff and all night New Year's Eve services.

Victoria's leadership on protecting the environment is maintained through funding for the State's water resources and a major bushfires package.

The 2004-05 Budget continues to provide the foundation for a strong Victorian economy. The 2004-05 Budget puts Victorian families first and makes sure they can access the services they need to raise and educate children, care for family members, and take advantage of the opportunities and benefits being generated by a strong Victorian economy.

JOHN BRUMBY MP  
Treasurer

# Achievements to Date



For over four years, the Bracks Government has focused on building a Victorian economy that is innovative, internationally competitive and globally connected. Alongside this ambitious economic agenda, the Government has delivered significant improvements to education, health and community safety, and invested in vital public and community infrastructure across the State. Key achievements include:

- bringing almost 5 000 extra teachers and staff back into Victorian schools (since June 1999), reducing class sizes, increasing school retention rates, and building 21 new schools and upgrading another 293;
- attracting more than 4 000 nurses and health staff back into the health system, modernising and upgrading hospitals, health services and aged care facilities, and investing more than \$1.5 billion in a new hospital demand management strategy to treat more patients, reduce elective surgery waiting times and open more hospital beds;
- boosting funding for child protection and care services including 60 new child protection workers;
- increasing statewide kindergarten participation rates to a record high;
- funding for an extra 1 400 police and 81 new police facilities across the State and significantly increased support for Victoria's emergency services;
- investing more than \$285 million in major road safety initiatives that have seen Victoria record its lowest ever road toll in 2003;
- announcing more than \$1 billion in tax cuts;
- investing over \$900 million in new developments in science, technology and innovation;
- directing more than \$2 billion towards projects supporting regional Victoria, reversing years of decline and boosting business, jobs and population growth in regional areas;
- establishing the world's first system of marine national parks and sanctuaries;
- commencing the *Linking Victoria* strategy to deliver world-class, efficient transport links across the State;
- introducing the most significant parliamentary reforms in 150 years, including fixed four-year terms and proportional representation for the Victorian Upper House;

- unveiling *Melbourne 2030*, a 30-year blueprint to curb Melbourne's urban sprawl and ensure Melbourne remains one of the world's most liveable cities; and
- reinforcing Melbourne's reputation as the world's most liveable city by undertaking major projects including the redevelopment of Spencer Street Station, the extension of Collins Street to Victoria Harbour, and the development of world class sporting facilities such as stage 2 of the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre and the redevelopment of the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

In the 2004-05 Budget, the Bracks Government continues to build on these achievements and deliver its election commitments, providing a strong foundation for future economic growth in a challenging global environment, driving further improvements in services and providing substantial additional support for Victorian families.

# 2004-05 Budget Highlights

## CONTINUED SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Government continues to deliver prudent financial management, providing a sound foundation for strong and sustained economic growth across Victoria. The Government's responsible financial management ensures that the benefits of Victoria's strong economic performance are invested in improving services, reducing disadvantage, supporting Victorian families and creating a more innovative and competitive business environment.

The Government continues its long-term objective to deliver a substantial budget operating surplus. In the short term, the Government continues to maintain an operating surplus of at least \$100 million. The Government has maintained low levels of net financial liabilities and reinforced Victoria's strong triple-A credit rating. The 2004-05 Budget delivers:

- an operating surplus of \$545 million for 2004-05, and surpluses averaging \$571 million for the following three years;
- net infrastructure investment of nearly \$10 billion for the next four years with a record investment of \$2.9 billion in 2004-05; and
- a reduction in net financial liabilities as a percentage of gross state product (GSP) and modest levels of net debt.

The Government's prudent financial management continues to be recognised with the international rating agencies, Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investors Service, again affirming Victoria's triple-A long-term credit rating in December 2003.

## PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST

The 2004-05 Budget delivers a major package of support for Victorian families. Key initiatives include:

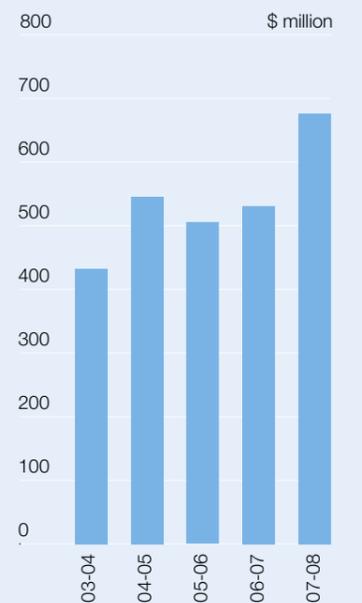
- \$128 million for the *First Home Bonus*, a one-off \$5 000 addition to the First Home Owner Grant for homes up to \$500 000;
- a \$177 million over four years and \$20 million total estimated investment (TEI) *Caring for Children* package to boost children's health and dental services, provide greater support for foster carers, and protect and care for vulnerable children;
- reducing public dental waiting lists (\$58 million over four years);
- providing 100 extra GPs in community health services to improve access to bulk-billed medical services (\$8 million over four years);
- boosting support and assistance for families caring for disabled children and disabled family members (\$47 million); and
- a \$50 million boost to the supply of affordable housing across Victoria.

## HIGH QUALITY ACCESSIBLE HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

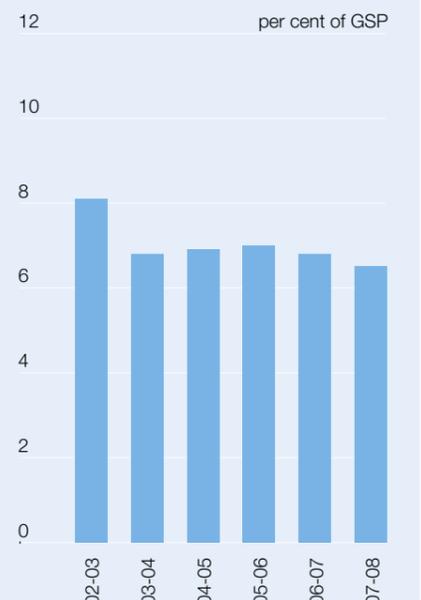
The Government is committing an additional \$1.9 billion over four years in output funding and \$355 million TEI in assets to continue to improve hospital and health care services into the future, improve access to services for families on low incomes and boost disability services. Key initiatives include:

- a \$1.6 billion package to treat an additional 35 000 hospital patients and 50 000 emergency department patients in 2004-05, employ 900 extra nurses and health staff, and ensure the financial sustainability of the hospital system;

## BUDGET SURPLUS



## NET FINANCIAL LIABILITIES FALLING



General government net financial liabilities (excluding the Growing Victoria Infrastructure Reserve)

# 2004-05 Budget Highlights



- \$162 million TEI for new and upgraded hospitals and community health facilities;
- \$80 million TEI for aged care facilities, improving quality and meeting the needs of an ageing population; and
- \$93 million TEI to improve dental health, ambulance services, medical infrastructure and disability facilities.

## VALUING AND INVESTING IN LIFELONG EDUCATION

The Government is committing a further \$296 million over four years in output funding and \$324 million TEI in assets to build on past education achievements. Key initiatives include:

- 250 additional teachers in Victorian government schools (\$62 million over four years);
- innovative and specialised vocational education and training (VET) programs (\$90 million over four years);
- new specialist facilities in secondary schools supporting science and technology, arts, design, music, languages and sport (\$30 million TEI);
- new facilities to be shared by schools, clubs and community groups (\$30 million TEI);
- providing new and replacement schools across the State, modernising existing school and TAFE facilities and rebuilding schools damaged by fire (\$174 million TEI);
- building 600 modern relocatable classrooms (\$50 million TEI); and
- additional funding for school maintenance programs (\$60 million over two years).

## SAFE STREETS, HOMES AND WORKPLACES

The Government is committing \$306 million over four years and \$207 million TEI in assets for Victoria's police, correctional and emergency service organisations to maintain Victoria's position as the safest State in Australia. Key initiatives include:

- boosting operational resources to maintain Victoria Police's high level of service to the community (\$112 million over four years);
- enhancing counter-terrorism measures (\$13 million over five years and \$16 million TEI);
- a new police station in Cranbourne and preliminary planning for new stations in Carlton, Springvale, Mildura, Torquay, and 14 rural towns (\$20 million);
- a new road safety infrastructure program to further improve road safety (\$130 million TEI); and
- continuation of the water safety program, *Play it Safe in the Water* (\$10 million over four years).

## GROWING AND LINKING ALL OF VICTORIA

The 2004-05 Budget commits \$447 million TEI in assets to build on the *Linking Victoria* program to provide more reliable and efficient transport links and services between Melbourne and the rest of the State. Key initiatives include:

- an outer-metropolitan arterial road upgrade program (\$164 million TEI);

- a rural roads package to improve key regional roads (\$73 million TEI);
- further funding for the Geelong Western Bypass (\$186 million TEI);
- rolling out a new train protection warning system and a range of safety measures on suburban trains (\$16 million TEI); and
- completion of remediation of the Flinders Street Station concourse structure (\$8.3 million TEI).

## MORE JOBS AND THRIVING, INNOVATIVE INDUSTRIES ACROSS VICTORIA

The Government is committing \$129 million over four years and \$384 million TEI in assets to continue its commitment to making Victoria the location of choice for investors. The April 2004 Economic Statement, *Victoria: Leading the Way*, delivers 19 priority actions to boost Victoria's economic performance in a challenging global environment, drive investment, cut business costs and boost jobs. Key initiatives include:

- a new Melbourne Convention Centre (\$367 million);
- funding to accelerate and complete detailed design studies to support improved rail and shipping access to the Port of Melbourne;
- extending the *Make it Happen in Provincial Victoria* campaign (\$5.7 million);
- a 10 per cent reduction in the average WorkCover premium rate, saving business \$180 million a year; and
- substantial land tax relief over the next five years.

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Government is committing \$146 million over four years and \$114 million TEI in assets to protect Victoria's natural environment, secure a higher quality water supply and improve natural resource management. Key initiatives include:

- a \$168 million bushfire package including:
  - 451 seasonal fire-fighters across the State;
  - new CFA fire stations and replacement of CFA fire-fighting vehicles; and
  - a new year-round emergency service program in every Victorian region; and
- upgrading water supply, sewerage treatment and irrigation systems in regional areas through the Victorian Water Trust (\$68 million TEI).

## BUILDING COHESIVE COMMUNITIES AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES

The Government is undertaking the most significant reform of State Government concessions in a decade to redirect benefits towards Victorians most in need of support and assistance, reduce inequality and disadvantage, and improve people's quality of life. Key initiatives include:

- close to a 60 per cent increase in the education maintenance allowance (EMA) to assist parents with schooling costs (\$74 million over four years);
- reducing the tertiary student public transport concession card annual fee to bring it into line with the school student fee (\$15 million over four years); and

- expanding eligibility so that all health care cardholders receive a concession on public transport (\$78 million over four years).

Other budget initiatives include:

- support for Victorian arts and cultural institutions and boosted funding to the Melbourne International Arts Festival (\$45 million); and
- funding towards a new national ice sports centre (\$9.6 million over three years).

## PROMOTING RIGHTS AND RESPECTING DIVERSITY

The Government is committing \$54 million over four years to ensure that people can fully participate in the Victorian community. Key initiatives include:

- increasing funding for the Victorian Multicultural Commission grants program (\$1.4 million over two years);
- expanding the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, acknowledging native title claims and supporting other Aboriginal community cultural needs (\$18 million over four years);
- enhancing the quality of life of Victoria's older people by promoting positive ageing (\$5 million over four years); and
- continuing the court referral for evaluation and drug intervention treatment and the criminal justice diversion program (\$12 million over four years).

# The Victorian Economy

*Victoria's continuing strong economic performance ensures the State is well placed to meet the challenges ahead and generate new opportunities from the changing global economy.*

For more than four years, the Government has focused on developing a diverse, innovative, export-oriented and globally connected Victorian economy capable of growing and prospering in a rapidly changing global environment. Victoria's strong economy reflects the success of the Government's approach.

Following on from the uncertainty created by the war in Iraq and the SARS epidemic in 2003, new challenges are emerging for the Victorian economy. These include the stronger Australian dollar (putting additional pressure on Victoria's manufacturers and exporters), recent rises in interest rates (leading to increased business costs), and an increasingly competitive global economy.

In the five years to 2002-03, the Victorian economy has experienced consistent and strong growth, averaging 3.9 per cent per annum – above the national average of 3.6 per cent for the same period and the second highest growth rate of all Australian States.

Domestic demand has been the main driver of Victoria's economic growth in recent years, particularly housing construction and business investment. Victorian per capita business investment remains above the national average and there is a strong forward program of work in public and private sector construction. In the year ahead, exports are set to make a stronger contribution to growth, with the global economy improving in the second half of 2003 and good growth prospects emerging for Victoria's key markets in 2004 and 2005.

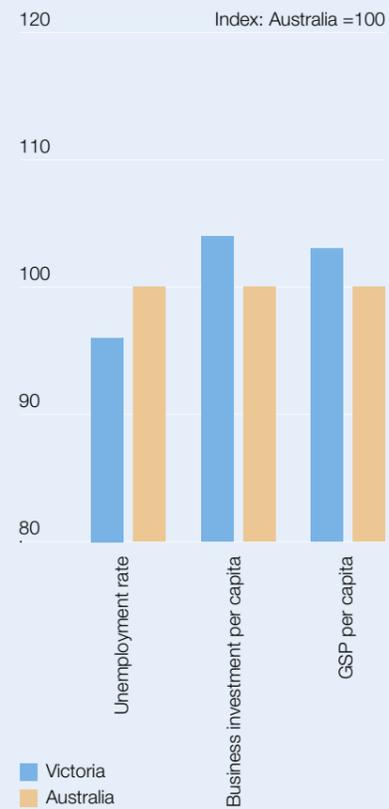
## VICTORIAN ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS %

	2002-03 Actual	2003-04 Forecast	2004-05 Forecast	2005-06 Projection	2006-07 Projection	2007-08 Projection
Economic growth	2.6	3.25	3.25	3.50	3.50	3.50
Employment growth	2.2	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Unemployment rate	5.8	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25	5.00
Inflation	3.3	2.25	2.00	2.25	2.50	2.50
Wages growth	3.6	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Population growth	1.2	1.10	1.10	1.00	1.00	1.00

The drought is estimated to have taken at least 1¼ percentage points from Victoria's economic growth in 2002-03. With the worst effects of the drought now passed, Victorian agricultural production rebounded in 2003-04. Agricultural exports and employment are expected to strengthen during 2004.

Victoria's economic growth is expected to be 3.25 per cent in both 2003-04 and 2004-05 and employment growth is expected to remain strong. Victoria's unemployment rate has been lower than the national average for the past 46 consecutive months, averaging 5.8 per cent in 2002-03. The unemployment rate is expected to average 5.5 per cent in 2003-04 and 2004-05.

## LEADING IN KEY MEASURES



Latest full year available

# Budget at a Glance

## REVENUE AND TAX REFORM

Total revenue of \$28 985 million is projected for 2004-05, representing a \$1 254 million increase (4.5 per cent) on the 2003-04 revised estimate.

The growth in revenue is due to additional Commonwealth grants revenue in 2004-05 compared to 2003-04 (6.0 per cent). General purpose grants are forecast to increase by less than the estimated increase in the GST pool, while increases in specific purpose grants largely reflect road grants and increases in Commonwealth assistance to non-government schools.

This budget sees further tax reform focused on reducing the burden for Victorian home buyers and businesses and enhancing the security of Victoria's taxation base. The Government is implementing several revenue initiatives in the 2004-05 Budget to provide assistance to households and businesses through:

- substantial land tax reform for businesses and individuals;
- increases in the threshold for conveyance duty exemptions for concession cardholders up to \$250 000, with a partial exemption to \$350 000;
- abolition of stamp duty on mortgages from 1 July 2004, saving households and businesses around \$200 million a year;
- abolition of debits tax, as part of the Intergovernmental Agreement, from 1 July 2005; and
- the simplification of payroll tax provisions for employment agents to align them with other Australian jurisdictions.

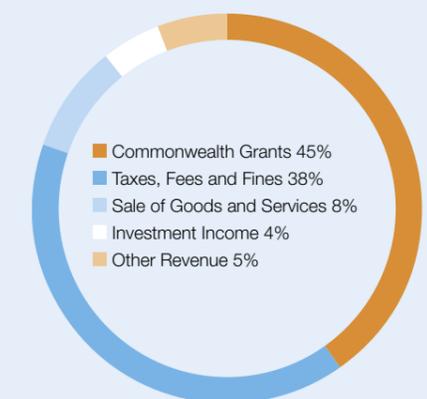
In addition, the integrity of Victoria's taxation base will be protected through compliance and legislative enhancements to ensure that an appropriate and fair amount of revenue is collected from high-value property transactions involving land.

## EXPENSES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

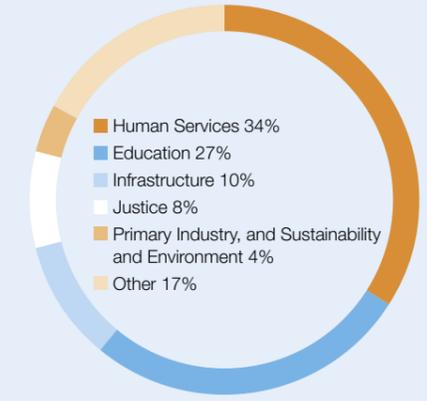
Total expenses are expected to be \$28 440 million in 2004-05, representing an increase of \$1 141 million (4.2 per cent) on the revised 2003-04 estimate. This increase primarily reflects net new output funding of \$688 million, and the impact of:

- better-than-anticipated performance in superannuation investment returns in 2003-04. In the budget and forward years, investment returns are assumed to return to long-term actuarial rates, contributing to a budget increase of \$1 015 million in 2004-05;
- the one-off impact of the Smelter Reduction Amount write-off in 2003-04 of \$1 250 million; and
- a range of other variations, including increased staffing levels, an increase in grants to non-government schools, increased depreciation expenses and a decline in borrowing costs.

## REVENUE 2004-05



## EXPENSES 2004-05





# Building Victoria's Infrastructure

*The Bracks Government's record investment in infrastructure is delivering the vital major projects Victoria needs to succeed in a competitive global economy, while ensuring all Victorians have access to world-class education and health care.*

Since coming to office, the Government has committed over \$7.4 billion to infrastructure projects across the whole of Victoria. Reflecting this significant infrastructure program, general government net infrastructure spending of \$2.9 billion in 2004-05 will be the biggest in the State's history.

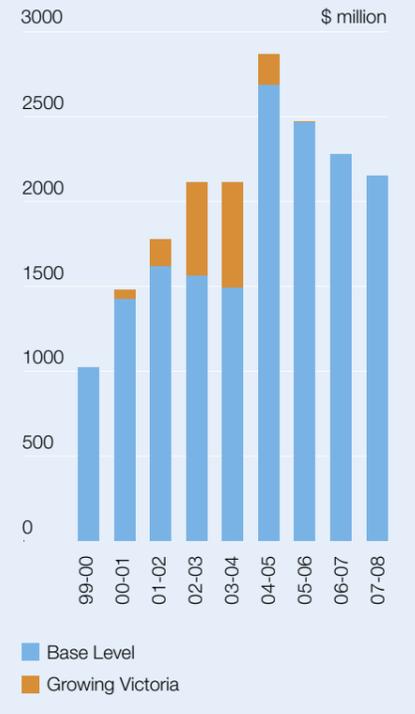
This budget continues the Government's commitment to building Victoria and creating jobs by committing \$2.0 billion TEI to boost infrastructure assets. Key projects include:

- \$334 million TEI for new and upgraded health, aged care and community support facilities across Victoria;
- \$306 million TEI to build better schools and upgrade equipment and facilities in schools and TAFEs;
- \$164 million TEI for an outer-metropolitan arterial road upgrade program;
- \$73 million TEI toward a rural roads package to improve key regional roads;
- \$23 million TEI towards new police and fire stations across the State;
- \$20 million TEI as part of the *Caring for Children* package to boost children's health and dental services and protect and care for vulnerable children; and
- \$16 million TEI towards enhancing counter terrorism infrastructure.

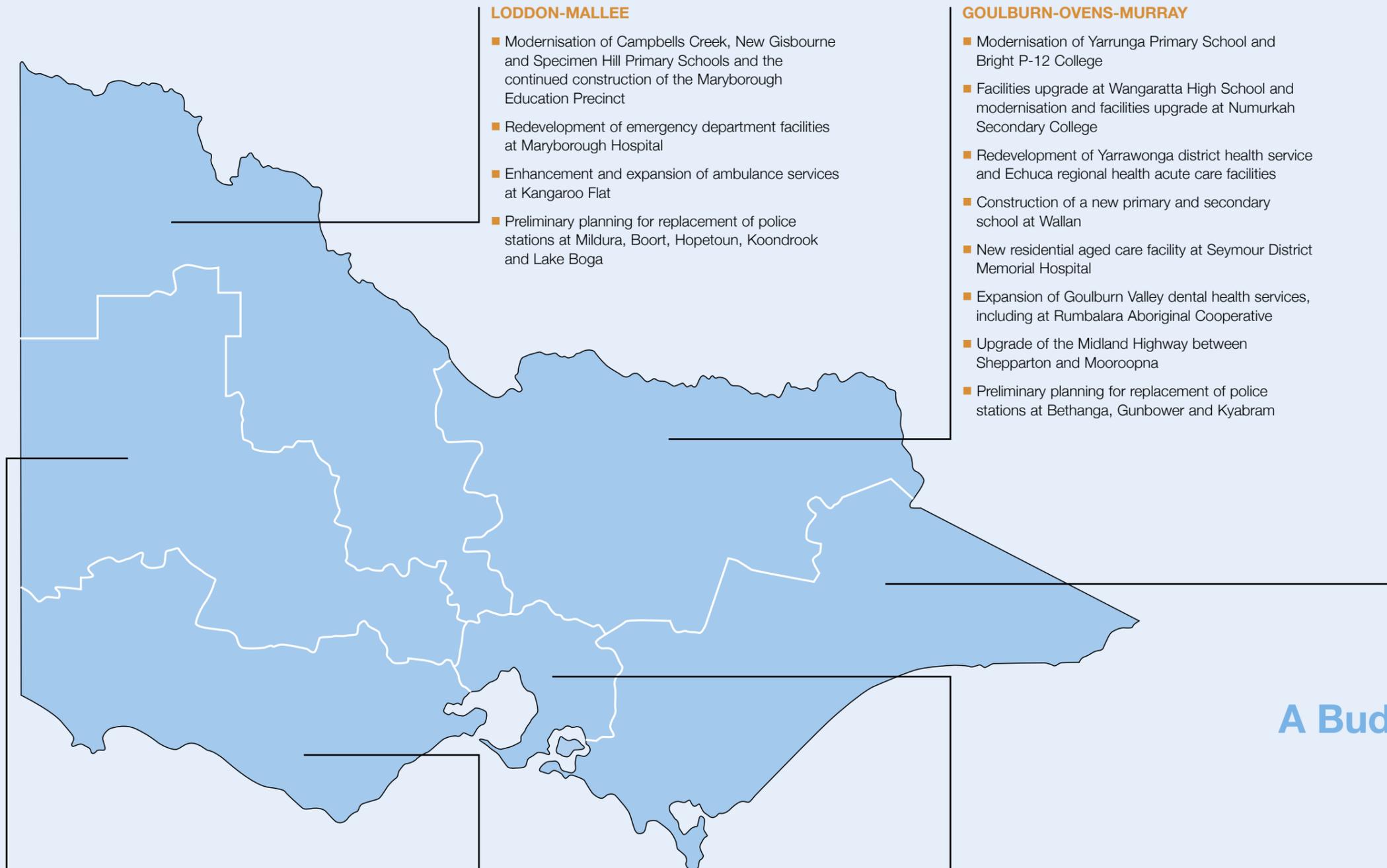
This new funding contributes to net infrastructure investment averaging \$2.4 billion a year over the period 2004-05 to 2007-08. This significant level of expenditure well exceeds estimated depreciation of around \$1.2 billion a year and results in growth of the real capital stock over the four years to June 2008 of 7.4 per cent, compared to projected population growth of 4.2 per cent.

This investment reaffirms the Government's commitment to ensuring Victoria has the modern, efficient infrastructure necessary to remain competitive in a global economy and to attract investment and generate jobs.

**BOOSTING VICTORIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE**



General government net asset investment



**LODDON-MALLEE**

- Modernisation of Campbells Creek, New Gisbourne and Specimen Hill Primary Schools and the continued construction of the Maryborough Education Precinct
- Redevelopment of emergency department facilities at Maryborough Hospital
- Enhancement and expansion of ambulance services at Kangaroo Flat
- Preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Mildura, Boort, Hopetoun, Koondrook and Lake Boga

**GOULBURN-OVENS-MURRAY**

- Modernisation of Yarrunga Primary School and Bright P-12 College
- Facilities upgrade at Wangaratta High School and modernisation and facilities upgrade at Numurkah Secondary College
- Redevelopment of Yarrawonga district health service and Echuca regional health acute care facilities
- Construction of a new primary and secondary school at Wallan
- New residential aged care facility at Seymour District Memorial Hospital
- Expansion of Goulburn Valley dental health services, including at Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
- Upgrade of the Midland Highway between Shepparton and Mooroopna
- Preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Bethanga, Gunbower and Kyabram

**GIPPSLAND**

- Modernisation of Traralgon Secondary College-West, Sale College-Macalister Campus and Yarram Secondary College
- Replacement of Warragul and District Specialist School
- Rebuild facilities that were recently damaged by fire at Cowes Primary School
- A new cancer treatment centre and community mental health care centre at Latrobe Regional Hospital, Traralgon
- Preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Inverloch, Leongatha and Stratford
- South Gippsland Highway upgrade from Loch to Bena
- Duplication of the Bass Highway from The Gurdies to Grantville

**CENTRAL HIGHLANDS-WIMMERA**

- Modernisation and consolidation of TAFE building studies at the University of Ballarat
- Enhancement and expansion of ambulance services at Ballan
- Preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Elmshurst, Lake Bolac and Nhill
- Modernisation of Darley, Delacombe and Alfredton Primary Schools
- New technology and arts facilities and modernisation at Nhill College

**BARWON-WESTERN**

- Funding towards the construction of the Geelong Western Bypass
- 108 bed redevelopment of the Grace McKellar Centre
- Expansion of radiotherapy services at Geelong Hospital
- Redevelopment of aged care facilities at Polwarth nursing home, Colac hospital site
- Preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Timboon and Torquay
- Replacement of Barwon Valley School
- Modernisation of Lara, Bellbrae and Grovedale Primary Schools and Apollo Bay P-12 College

**MELBOURNE**

- New elective surgery centre adjacent to the Alfred Hospital
- Melbourne Convention Centre redevelopment
- Stage 2 of the Dandenong Hospital redevelopment
- Replacement of police station at Cranbourne and preliminary planning for replacement of police stations at Carlton and Springvale
- New cancer treatment facilities at the Royal Children's Hospital, the Monash Medical Centre and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
- New purpose-built facility at Doutta Galla Community Health Service
- Modernised facilities at 47 schools

**A Budget for all Victorians**

**STATEWIDE**

- Replacement and upgrade of medical equipment
- Replacement of ambulance service vehicles
- Improved access to affordable housing
- Linking schools and communities through Schoolyard Blitz and Communities Facilities Fund
- Major school infrastructure projects including the building and further development of seven schools, replacement and rebuilding of four schools, and the modernisation of 65 schools
- Building of 600 new relocatable classrooms and additional funds for school maintenance programs
- A program of road safety infrastructure improvements in outer-metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria
- Maintain and upgrade teaching equipment in TAFEs

# Putting Families First

The Government recognises that many Victorian families need greater practical support in their daily lives and is delivering a major new package of support to assist families.



For over four years, the Government has significantly improved education, health and community support services for Victorian families. The Government recognises that higher levels of support are needed to assist Victorian families – especially those on low incomes. The 2004-05 Budget commits substantial additional funding towards a major package of measures to put Victorian families first.

## HELPING FAMILIES WITH HOUSING

The Government recognises that while Victoria's strong housing market has been good news for many Victorian families, others are struggling to find affordable housing. To assist these Victorians, the 2004-05 Budget delivers a \$286 million housing affordability package.

To help families purchase a home, the budget provides:

- \$128 million in 2004-05 for an additional \$5 000 *First Home Bonus* until 30 June 2005. The *First Home Bonus* will bring the total grant available to Victorian first homebuyers to \$12 000 for properties up to \$500 000. The bonus will give 26 000 Victorians a substantial helping hand to purchase their first home; and
- up to \$22 million per year to increase the threshold for the conveyance duty exemption for concession cardholders. A full exemption will be available on properties valued up to \$250 000 and a partial exemption available on properties up to \$350 000. This increase will assist 14 000 Victorians on low incomes to purchase a home over the next four years.

These significant measures are in addition to the Government's abolition of duty on mortgages from 1 July 2004. This tax cut, which is worth around \$200 million per year, will result in a saving of over \$1 000 on the purchase of a median priced home.

The Bracks Government has upgraded existing public housing stock and over 5 800 new social housing units have been provided. To further improve access to affordable housing, the budget provides:

- \$50 million boost to the supply of affordable housing across Victoria.

## HELPING FAMILIES WITH HEALTH CARE

Alongside the substantial new investment to rebuild Victoria's health system, the 2004-05 Budget delivers additional assistance to Victorian families, including:

- \$58 million over four years to reduce public dental waiting lists and treat an additional 130 000 people; and
- \$8 million over four years to provide 100 extra GPs in community health services to improve access to bulk-billed medical services.

## CARING FOR CHILDREN

Investment in children is an investment in a better future for all Victorians.

Government initiatives have included establishing the *Best Start* program to link services aimed at improving the development of children, setting up 60 children's centres across the State, and improving Victoria's child protection system.

The 2004-05 Budget builds on these achievements (and on the \$88 million *Children First* strategy implemented in the 2003-04 Budget) by providing \$177 million over four years and \$20 million TEI to boost children's health and protect and care for vulnerable children. Key initiatives include:

- an additional \$25 million over four years to continue to improve Victoria's child protection system, including innovative approaches to early intervention and prevention of child abuse and neglect and an expanded diversion program to assist young people and their families resolve crises without resorting to out-of-home care;
- \$21 million over four years to help foster carers meet school expenses, dental and health care costs and other expenses;
- \$34 million over four years for children's dental services, including extending the school dental service to kindergarten children and treating an extra 75 000 school students;
- \$32 million over four years for the centres for adolescent and child health to treat abused children, children with hearing and speech difficulties and those with brain conditions, diabetes and a range of other illnesses;
- \$4.1 million over four years for a seamless paediatric cancer service across the Royal Children's Hospital, the Monash Medical Centre and the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre;
- \$10 million over four years to support Indigenous children and their families by extending the Aboriginal family decision-making pilot program and implementing the Indigenous family violence strategy;

- \$4.2 million TEI to expand child intensive care facilities, with extra neonatal intensive care cots and expansion of the paediatric intensive care unit at Monash Medical Centre;

- an allocation of \$41 million over four years from the hospital sustainability package to the Royal Children's Hospital and \$6 million TEI to improve cancer treatment facilities for children at the Royal Children's Hospital; and

- \$6.8 million over four years for a new program to conduct hearing tests for newborn babies.

Other initiatives to support children include:

- a further \$3.2 million over four years to enable 200 kindergartens to employ professional, regionally-based managers; and
- \$0.5 million in 2004-05 to assist schools and local councils establish outside school hours child care services.

## SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH A DISABLED CHILD OR FAMILY MEMBER

The Government recognises that families caring for a disabled child or family member incur additional costs and face added pressures. Key initiatives to assist these families include:

- \$12 million over four years to increase support services for carers of people with a disability;
- \$8.3 million over four years for 650 additional respite periods for carers; and
- \$1.4 million to help an additional 950 families and carers manage complex and difficult behaviour by children with a disability.

## MAJOR CONCESSIONS REFORM

Victorian families will also benefit from the Government undertaking the most significant reforms of concessions in decades, redirecting benefits towards Victorians most in need.

Key measures to assist Victorian families include:

- \$74 million over four years to help parents with schooling expenses by increasing the education maintenance allowance (EMA);
- \$15 million over four years to reduce the tertiary student public transport concession card fee; and
- \$78 million over four years to extend public transport concession to all health care cardholders, benefiting working families on low incomes.

Details are set out on page 23.

# High quality accessible health and community services

Growing Victoria Together

The Government continues to rebuild Victoria's health system, improving the quality and accessibility of Victoria's hospitals, health services, aged care and disability support.



The Government has already made significant progress towards rebuilding Victoria's health system. Our hospitals now treat an additional 35 000 patients each year and have halved the number of hospital bypass incidents and reduced elective surgery waiting lists.

The 2004-05 Budget commits an additional \$1.9 billion over four years in output funding and \$355 million TEI in assets to continue to improve health services across the State.

## ENHANCING HOSPITAL SERVICES INTO THE FUTURE

The Government is implementing a package of measures to establish a strong financial and governance base in public hospitals and to continue implementation of the hospital demand management strategy.

In addition to the \$464 million provided in last year's budget, the 2004-05 Budget provides \$1.6 billion over four years to enable hospitals to treat more patients, while investing in strategies to prevent unnecessary emergency department admissions and direct patients to more appropriate community-based care.

The \$1.6 billion package will treat an additional 35 000 hospital patients and 50 000 emergency department patients in 2004-05, employ 900 extra nurses and health staff, and ensure the financial sustainability of the hospital system.

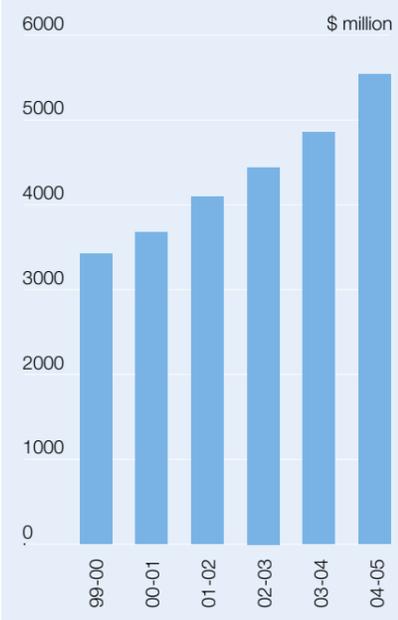


## INVESTING IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND SERVICES ACROSS VICTORIA

To ensure Victoria's health system meets the growing expectations and demands of the Victorian community, the 2004-05 Budget continues the Government's capital upgrade program, including:

- \$15 million TEI for stage 2 of the redevelopment of Dandenong Hospital;
- \$60 million TEI for an elective surgery centre next to the Alfred Hospital;
- \$9.2 million TEI for stage 3b of redevelopment of the Royal Melbourne Hospital; and
- \$8 million TEI to purchase land for the development of super clinics in the growing metropolitan areas of Craigieburn, Melton and Lilydale.

## INCREASED SPENDING ON ACUTE HEALTH



The 2004-05 Budget continues the Government's capital investment in regional health services, including:

- \$19 million TEI contribution to a new cancer treatment centre and a new mental health care centre at Latrobe Regional Hospital in Traralgon;
- \$18 million TEI to expand radiotherapy services at Geelong Hospital;
- \$9.5 million TEI to redevelop accident and emergency at Maryborough Hospital; and
- \$7.7 million TEI for acute facilities at Echuca regional health.

The 2004-05 Budget also provides initiatives for community health, dental health and ambulances, with:

- \$22 million TEI to strengthen community health centres across Victoria;
- \$92 million over four years to improve the dental health of the Victorian community;
- \$7.5 million TEI for ambulance stations, and vehicles and equipment; and
- \$70 million TEI towards world-class medical technology and upgrading and maintaining high-quality medical infrastructure.

## IMPROVING AGED CARE SERVICES

The Government continues to improve and upgrade aged care services and facilities across Victoria. Key initiatives include:

- \$50 million TEI for the next stage of the redevelopment of the Grace McKellar Centre in Geelong;
- \$14 million TEI to redevelop the Polwarth Nursing Home in Colac;

- \$11 million TEI to redevelop nursing home and acute services in the Yarrowonga district; and

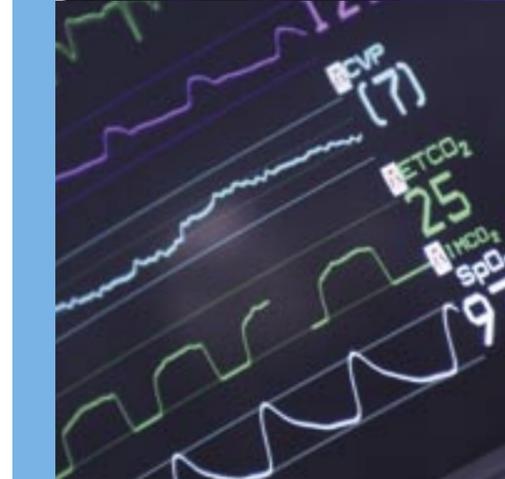
- \$5 million TEI to construct an aged care facility at the Seymour District Memorial Hospital.

## STRENGTHENING DISABILITY SERVICES

The Government launched *The State Disability Plan* in September 2002, outlining a ten-year vision to support people with disabilities. Innovative services, early intervention and carer support will give people with a disability greater opportunities to remain at home, retain their independence and participate fully in community life. The 2004-05 Budget supports this vision, including:

- \$27 million over four years to increase support services for carers of people with a disability, provide additional respite care and assist 5 300 more people access the Aids and Equipment program;
- \$10 million over three years to establish the Disability Housing Trust to provide more sustainable and cost-effective accommodation options; and
- \$10 million TEI to improve accommodation for people who are living in shared supported accommodation.

In addition, the Government has committed \$87 million TEI and \$42 million over four years to support residents moving from Kew Residential services to new houses in the community.



# Valuing and investing in lifelong education

Growing Victoria Together

*The Bracks Government continues its drive to build a world-class education and training system for Victoria.*



Education is the Bracks Government's number one priority. Excellence in lifelong education ensures better career opportunities for young Victorians and provides Victoria with a more highly skilled workforce to drive economic growth. It also ensures that all Victorians have the opportunity to fully contribute to Victoria's economy and society.

Since coming to office, the Government has built 21 new schools and upgraded 293 schools across Victoria, and reduced average prep to year 2 class sizes. There are now almost 5 000 more teachers and staff in government schools compared to June 1999.

The Government launched the *Blueprint for Government Schools* in November 2003. The Blueprint outlines strategies to ensure all schools pursue excellence in teaching and achieve better student outcomes.

The 2004-05 Budget provides a further \$296 million over four years in output funding and \$324 million TEI in assets to build on these achievements and drive excellence in education, increase access and opportunities, and build better schools and community assets.

## EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Government continues its clear commitment to promoting excellence and innovation for students and teachers. The 2004-05 Budget provides for further investment and initiatives, including:

- 250 additional teachers in Victorian government schools (\$62 million over four years);
- \$90 million over four years for the delivery of innovative VET programs;
- \$12 million TEI for upgrading teaching equipment in TAFEs to keep pace with new technologies;
- \$4.5 million over three years for teacher training, especially returning teachers, and to retrain teachers in rural and regional areas in difficult-to-staff subjects;
- \$1.8 million over four years and \$1 million TEI towards Adult Community Education (ACE); and
- \$1.5 million to pilot a student management information system to track student performance.

## INCREASING ACCESS, EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Encouraging community involvement in our education system is important to overcome disengagement, one of the greatest obstacles to improving education outcomes. The 2004-05 Budget provides:

- \$30 million TEI for new specialist facilities in secondary schools supporting science and technology, arts, design, music, languages and sport;
- \$30 million TEI to build school facilities to be shared with clubs and community groups;
- \$10 million TEI for individual grants to schools to engage community participation in improving schoolyards and facilities; and
- \$4 million TEI and \$12 million over four years for faster internet access in government schools.

## BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ASSETS

The 2004-05 Budget commits further investment to build, replace and upgrade schools across the State, including:

- \$174 million TEI to build and further develop seven schools, replace and rebuild four schools, and upgrade 65 schools and TAFE facilities throughout Victoria;
- \$50 million TEI to build 600 modern relocatable classrooms; and
- \$60 million over two years for additional school maintenance programs.

# Safe streets, homes and workplaces

Growing Victoria Together

*The Government is committed to maintaining Victoria as the safest State in Australia.*



Since coming to office, the Government has committed funding for 1 400 additional police, funded 81 new police facilities across the State, invested significantly in technology for emergency services and provided a \$98 million package to ensure Victoria is well positioned to respond to potential terrorist threats.

This budget builds on this investment in community safety to ensure that Victoria's police, correctional, and emergency service organisations have the resources they need to keep Victoria a place where all its citizens feel safe.

## MORE RESPONSIVE POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In January 2004, the Government launched the Victoria Police five-year plan, *The Way Ahead*, which provides a blueprint for how the Government's significant investment in community safety will assist in keeping Victoria the safest State in Australia. To support *The Way Ahead* and Victoria Police's target of a minimum 5 per cent drop in the crime rate over five years, the Government will commit:

- \$112 million over four years to provide the operational resources needed to maintain Victoria Police's high level of service to the community;
- \$14 million over four years for 46 additional forensic staff in line with Victoria Police's goal of undertaking more proactive, intelligence-led operations and to address increased demand for forensic services; and
- \$20 million for a new police station in Cranbourne and for preliminary planning for new stations in Carlton, Mildura, Springvale, Torquay and 14 rural towns.

In addition to the \$30 million provided in last year's budget, the 2004-05 Budget further strengthens Victoria's emergency services, including a \$168 million bushfires package. Initiatives include:

- \$27 million TEI to purchase new fire equipment and upgrade roads to protect national parks;
- \$11 million TEI contribution for 11 new and modified fire stations and 190 fire fighting vehicles for the Country Fire Authority;
- \$1.2 million over four years and \$1.7 million TEI to increase the number of computer-aided dispatch and training workstations to improve the capacity at the state emergency call centre; and
- \$0.4 million TEI to introduce a single statewide emergency number for the State Emergency Service.

## ENHANCED SECURITY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM RESPONSE

Victoria must be able to respond to any potential terrorist threat in a swift and effective manner. In this budget, the Government is providing further counter-terrorism measures, including:

- \$13 million over five years for enhanced intelligence and laboratory capabilities and trauma support; and
- \$16 million TEI for additional surveillance resources, specialist forensic equipment, personnel protective equipment and mobile lighting towers.

## IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY

Since coming to office, the Government has implemented a number of initiatives to improve road safety, including a \$240 million accident blackspot program, reducing urban and school zone speed limits, and programs aimed at reducing driver fatigue, speed and drink-driving. These measures have significantly reduced Victoria's road toll.

In line with the aim of continuing to improve Victoria's road safety, the budget includes:

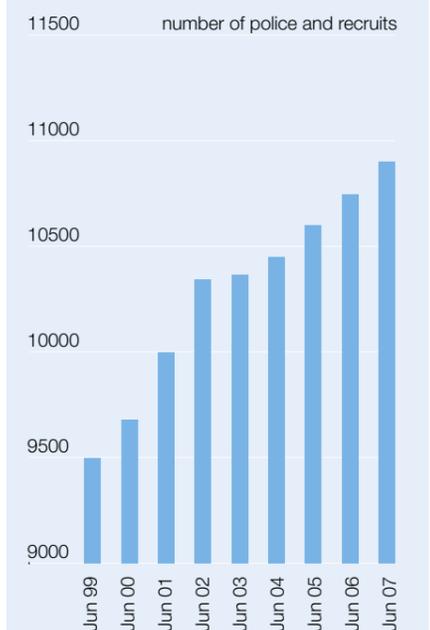
- Transport Accident Commission funding for a range of road safety infrastructure projects in regional and metropolitan areas (\$130 million TEI).

## IMPROVING WATER SAFETY

The Government has also made strong inroads into Victoria's water safety, with the number of drownings in Victoria falling from 64 in 1998-99 to 40 in 2002-03. The 2004-05 Budget provides:

- \$10 million over four years to continue the water safety program aimed at keeping Victorians safe in the water; and
- \$3.3 million towards a new Life Saving Victoria education and training headquarters on the Port Melbourne foreshore.

## ADDITIONAL POLICE NUMBERS



# Growing and linking all of Victoria

Growing Victoria Together

*The Government continues to build a world-class transport network and create a competitive and innovative business environment to attract investment and jobs across Victoria.*



An integrated, efficient and reliable transport and communications network is essential to drive economic growth and link Victoria's people, businesses and communities across the whole State.

*Linking Victoria* provides the blueprint for the Government's transport policy. Key projects under this program include fast rail links to regional centres, new train and tram rolling stock, the redevelopment of Spencer Street Station and the Mitcham-Frankston Freeway.

The 2004-05 Budget builds on the *Linking Victoria* program to further improve Victoria's transport links.

## IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Government is committed to restoring stability in the public transport system. In February 2004, the Government announced new five-year public transport partnership agreements, based on more conservative assumptions than the previous unsustainable contracts. Funding of \$1.1 billion over five years has been provided for the costs of the new rail partnerships.

Under these new arrangements, the Government has secured the following initiatives:

- 100 additional front line staff, including Safe Travel staff to travel on trains after 9pm;
- 30 extra train stations staffed in morning peak times and 20 extra stations staffed on weekday afternoons;
- all night New Year's Eve train services, with tram services to run to 2am and Nightrider buses to run all night on New Year's Eve;
- a tram priority program to target 'red spots' that cause delay to trams;

- the Docklands Drive tram extension; and
  - the continued delivery of 46 new trains and at least 25 additional new trams.
- The 2004-05 Budget provides a further \$49 million of initiatives, including:
- \$8.3 million to continue the rehabilitation of Flinders Street Station concourse;
  - \$17 million over two years to conduct feasibility work on a smartcard public transport ticketing system;
  - \$5 million to extend the current *TravelSmart* program;
  - \$3 million over three years for the bus component of the 'red spot' program, which will reduce bus network congestion; and
  - \$16 million TEI for rolling out of a train protection warning system and a range of safety measures on suburban trains.

## REDUCING THE ROAD TOLL

Deaths and major/serious injuries per 100 000 population



## LINKING THE SUBURBS AND LINKING REGIONAL VICTORIA

The Government is focused on improving services to support Melbourne's growing population and to strengthen links between Melbourne and the rest of the State. The 2004-05 Budget provides:

- \$164 million TEI for an outer-metropolitan arterial road program, upgrading priority roads in outer suburbs and growth corridors, including Mill Park, Berwick, Point Cook, Roxburgh Park, Langwarrin, Attwood, St Albans, Endeavour Hills and Templestowe Lower;
- \$73 million TEI for a rural roads package to improve key regional roads, including upgrading the Mooropna Causeway, duplicating the Bass Highway from The Gurdies to Grantville and upgrading the South Gippsland Highway from Loch to Bena; and
- \$186 million TEI towards the Geelong Western Bypass.

# More jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria

Growing Victoria Together



Thriving, innovative industries create jobs and increase living standards for all Victorians. The Government has invested heavily in drivers of a modern, diverse and flexible economy. This includes significant investment in new infrastructure and cutting business taxes by more than \$1 billion.

The 2004-05 Budget continues the commitment to make Victoria the location of choice for investment and business competitiveness.

## VICTORIA: LEADING THE WAY

On 20 April 2004, the Government released the Economic Statement, *Victoria: Leading the Way*, which outlines new actions to ensure Victoria's strong economic performance continues.

Actions in *Victoria: Leading the Way* will:

- stimulate investment and new jobs;
- invest in world's best infrastructure;
- make Victoria the location of choice for investors;
- foster innovative and export-oriented businesses;
- cut red tape and lower the cost of doing business;
- maximise the sustainable returns from our natural resource base; and
- boost the competitiveness of Victoria's services sector.

## CUTTING THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

In its first five years, the Government announced business tax cuts worth over \$1 billion. In addition, *Victoria: Leading the Way* provides substantial land tax relief which will:

- increase the land tax-free threshold by \$25 000 to \$175 000;
- increase the middle land tax thresholds by 10 per cent over two years; and
- reduce the top land tax rate progressively to 3 per cent by 2008-09.

Also, the average WorkCover premium rate will be reduced by 10 per cent in 2004-05, consolidating Victoria's scheme as having the second lowest average premium in Australia and one that is 25 per cent below that of New South Wales. This initiative will save Victorian businesses \$180 million a year. These cuts are in addition to the abolition of duty on mortgages, which takes effect from 1 July 2004.

## DRIVING INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Government is committed to investing in world-class infrastructure to drive economic opportunities across the State. *Victoria: Leading the Way* provides:

- \$367 million for the redevelopment of the Melbourne Convention Centre to give Victoria a world-class integrated exhibition and convention centre;
- \$15 million for the acceleration and completion of detailed design studies for the channel deepening project;
- \$2.1 million for detailed designs of the Dynon Port rail link, a project valued at over \$120 million;

- up to \$4.7 million towards final site analysis and site design for the relocation and redevelopment of the Melbourne Wholesale Markets; and
- an additional \$1 million per year for *Invest Victoria*, which is expected to drive an additional \$6 billion of new investment over the next four years.

## PROMOTING VICTORIA'S BUSINESSES TO THE WORLD

Opening new markets for exports creates business growth and attracts jobs and investment. Initiatives to support Victorian businesses and the Government's target to boost exports to \$30 billion by 2010 include:

- \$5 million in 2004-05 for Victorian industry exposure at the 2005 World Expo in Japan;
- \$3 million over three years for the *Opening Doors Export Plan* to promote Victoria;
- \$5.8 million over three years to grow Victoria's share of the international education market; and
- an additional \$2.3 million over three years to activate the *Next Generation Food Strategy*.

# Protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development

Growing Victoria Together

Victoria continues its leadership in protecting the environment and using water resources more wisely and sustainably.



Since coming to office, the Government has invested significant resources to protect and enhance Victoria's environment, including ensuring the long-term sustainable future of our forests and the hardwood timber industry and introducing marine parks and sanctuaries.

The 2004-05 Budget provides initiatives to protect Victoria's environment, particularly in response to bushfires and to secure a higher quality water supply. Funding for continuing programs includes:

- \$9.8 million over seven years from 2005-06 for research on growing a sustainable coal industry;
- \$8.4 million over three years for the national eradication program for red imported fire ants; and
- additional funding of \$4 million in 2004-05 for Victoria's contribution to the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

## RESPONDING TO BUSHFIRES

*The Report of the Inquiry into the 2002-03 Victorian Bushfires* (the Esplin Report), released on 14 October 2003, found that Victoria's fire-fighting agencies performed admirably. It also made a number of recommendations to achieve an even higher standard of bushfire protection for all Victorians. This budget commits \$130 million over five years and \$38 million TEI to implement the recommendations of the Esplin Report and other initiatives, including:

- \$74 million over four years for 451 seasonal fire-fighters;
- \$30 million over four years to implement a year-round emergency service program in every region across the State;



- \$5.8 million over four years to increase community fire awareness and education; and
- \$38 million TEI contribution for roads and equipment and new fire stations and fire-fighting vehicles for the CFA.

## SECURING THE FUTURE OF VICTORIA'S WATER RESOURCES

The Government is committed to enhancing the health and sustainability of Victoria's water resources.

The 2004-05 Budget provides \$68 million TEI to support a number of projects across the State, including:

- improving water supplies and sewerage in rural towns;
- creating a major green region in Werribee Plains, including the use of recycled water; and
- upgrading irrigation and water supply systems, particularly from the Goulburn and Broken Rivers.

The Government will release the *Securing Our Water Future* white paper by mid 2004, which will set out the actions Victoria needs to take to ensure the efficient allocation of water resources.

# Building cohesive communities and reducing inequalities

Growing Victoria Together

The Government is boosting support for Victorians on low incomes through major reform of State Government concessions.

Community building reflects the Government's commitment to reducing inequality and improving people's quality of life.

## CONCESSIONS REFORM PACKAGE

The Government is undertaking the most significant reform of State Government concessions in a decade, to retarget benefits towards those Victorians most in need of support and assistance, particularly families on low incomes. The motor vehicle registration concession will be reduced from 100 per cent to 50 per cent and the savings redirected towards ensuring that the concessions system is fair, better targeted and directed towards boosting social and economic participation by all Victorians. Initiatives include:

- \$43 million over four years to increase the local government rates concession to pensioners, helping them stay in their family homes and retain their community links;
- \$19 million over four years to index annually key State Government concessions, ensuring the real value of benefits is maintained;
- \$78 million over four years to expand eligibility so that all health care cardholders receive a concession on public transport;
- \$15 million over four years to reduce the tertiary student public transport concession card fee to the same cost as the school student fee;
- \$58 million over four years to reduce public dental waiting lists;
- \$27 million over four years to improve and extend dental services for children of low-income earners;

- \$74 million over four years to assist parents with schooling costs by increasing the education maintenance allowance (EMA) from \$127 to \$200 for primary students and from \$254 to \$400 for secondary students; and

- expanding conveyance duty exemptions for concession cardholders (\$87 million over four years).

## ARTS, CULTURE AND SPORT

Victoria is Australia's sporting, arts and cultural centre with over 7.9 million visits to Victoria's major arts and cultural venues in 2002-03.

The Government recognises the role of the arts in building strong communities in its ten-year arts policy, *Creative Capacity+: Arts for all Victorians*. The 2004-05 Budget provides:

- \$6.1 million over three years to enable Museum Victoria to refresh exhibitions;
- \$12 million over four years for the Melbourne International Arts Festival;
- \$9.6 million over three years towards the construction of an international standard ice sports centre in Melbourne;
- \$8.5 million over four years for the *Living Libraries* program, supporting local government to enhance public library services in outer metropolitan areas and rural Victoria; and
- \$5 million a year from 2005-06 to support the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

The Government continues to provide funding for the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, upgrading key infrastructure, building new sporting facilities and ensuring all Victorians enjoy the benefits of the largest event ever staged in Victoria.



# Promoting rights and respecting diversity

Growing Victoria Together

*Victoria's cultural diversity is one of the State's greatest strengths, delivering social and economic benefits to all Victorians.*

The Government recognises that one of the State's greatest strengths is the diversity of its people. The Government continues to ensure that all Victorians have access to the information they need to exercise their rights and fully participate in the Victorian community.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Since coming to office, the Government has created the Department for Victorian Communities to provide a more coordinated approach to delivering government services in a way that supports, strengthens and revitalises communities. The Government has also increased resources for the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC). The Government continues this support in the 2004-05 Budget by increasing funding for the VMC grants program by \$1.4 million over two years.

The Government is committed to working in partnership with Victorian Indigenous communities and their organisations to strengthen their communities, improve access to health services and recreation facilities, and open up opportunities.

In addition to the \$10 million for Indigenous children and families provided in the *Caring for Children* initiative, the 2004-05 Budget also provides:

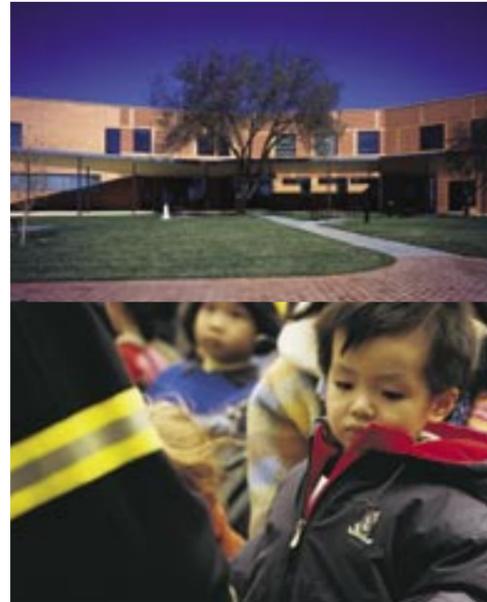
- \$13 million over four years to expand the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement in partnership with the Aboriginal community;
- \$3 million over three years for an Indigenous community capacity building program;
- \$3.8 million over four years to assist Indigenous business owners and managers through the Koori Business Network;

- \$0.5 million TEI for an Aboriginal Commemorative Place;
- \$2 million over four years to meet obligations under an in-principle agreement with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and implement the Wotjobaluk native title claim settlement; and
- \$0.3 million in 2004-05 to further negotiate land and resource management outcomes with Indigenous communities.

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The 2004-05 Budget contains a number of initiatives to improve awareness of rights and increase access to justice for all Victorians. Key initiatives include:

- \$12 million over four years to continue the court referral for evaluation and drug intervention treatment and the criminal justice diversion programs; and
- an additional \$4.1 million over four years for the Victorian Ombudsman to build investigative capacity for major issues, including allegations of police corruption (announced in April 2004).



2004-05 Victorian Budget Overview  
[www.budget.vic.gov.au](http://www.budget.vic.gov.au)

