



Getting on with the job

Victorian Budget 17/18
Rural and Regional
Budget Information Paper

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Budget Paper No. 1 – Treasurer’s Speech
Budget Paper No. 2 – Strategy and Outlook
Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery
Budget Paper No. 4 – State Capital Program
Budget Paper No. 5 – Statement of Finances (incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No. 3)

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Growing regional communities

Victoria is booming – more jobs were created here in the past year than in the rest of Australia combined.

Since 2014, the Andrews Labor Government has invested more than \$8.5 billion in our regions.

This Budget contributes a record \$4 billion investment in the schools and hospitals, in roads and rail, in community facilities and community organisations that are at the heart of why more and more people are choosing to live in regional Victoria.

The Andrews Labor Government is making sure that every Victorian shares in the benefit of our success – and that starts in our regions.

We're making sure our regional cities, towns, and rural communities have the infrastructure and services they need to thrive.

And we're creating more regional jobs. Victoria's regional jobs market is now one of the strongest in the nation – regional employment grew by 2.1 per cent in 2016 alone – a clear sign of the strength of our regions.

This Budget builds on last year's record regional investment, with an additional \$4 billion specifically for the regions. This includes:

- \$1.12 billion in regional public transport to give regional Victorians more trains, better bus services, new connections and station upgrades to get them where they need to go quickly, reliably and safely
- \$530.6 million to maintain and upgrade regional roads and bridges, and plan for future expansions to cater for regional growth as well as improve travel times and safety on Victoria's regional roads
- \$76 million to upgrade rural and regional schools and ensure every child gets every chance to succeed
- \$72.5 million to deliver on the priorities that matter to regional communities, including improving digital access and reducing black spots

- \$50 million to double the First Home Owner Grant to \$20 000 for new homes in regional areas, which will help thousands of regional Victorians to buy their first home
- \$47.8 million to construct a new government hub in Ballarat, which will bring an additional 600 jobs to the region

These are the foundations of strong regional cities and small towns that will continue to attract people to live in regional Victoria – keeping it a great place to work and raise a family.

Victoria's regional economy is underpinned by our world-renowned agriculture, but it's also home to a thriving tourism sector and close to 30 per cent of Victoria's small businesses.

To help create more jobs and grow our regional cities and towns, this Budget will make it easier to do business in regional Victoria.

We'll reduce the payroll tax rate by 25 per cent for all businesses operating substantially in regional Victoria.

This will decrease costs for regional businesses, and help create more jobs, because we can't have a strong Victoria without strong regions.



Regional partnerships

Each region has its own history and its own priorities.

It's why the Andrews Labor Government established nine Regional Partnerships across our state, to hear from the people who know their communities best and turn their priorities into action.

Regional Partnerships have been established in Barwon, Central Highlands, Gippsland, Goulburn, Great South Coast, Loddon Campaspe, Ovens Murray, Mallee and Wimmera Southern Mallee. They include local leaders, volunteers, health and education experts, business people, innovators, entrepreneurs and community advocates.

It is these diverse groups of people who have told us what matters to their region – and we've listened.

Regional communities have told us they want investments that support stronger, more connected regional centres and small towns.

Through the *Victorian Budget 2017/18*, we've provided \$29 million to identify, develop and deliver Regional Partnerships priorities, including the:

- Development of a destination management plan for Gippsland Tourism to encourage agritourism in the region
- Design of pilot projects based on the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District Masterplan that maximise the irrigation and other groundwater within the district
- Delivery of the Next Stage Riverfront Development in Swan Hill, to boost tourism and the local economy
- Funding for Regional Partnerships to develop business cases on priority projects, and enable more comprehensive engagement with each area
- Delivery of the Food and Fibre Action Plan to advance the food and fibre sector in the Great South Coast region
- Upgrade of infrastructure to encourage tourism in the Great South Coast and Barwon
- Investment in cycling infrastructure in the Ovens Murray region

- Creation of a shared community library resource at the Robinvale Community Hub in the Mallee to improve community and educational resources in the region
- Development of a business model to advance the Wimmera Southern Mallee region's competitive advantage in agri-science
- Planning to develop a thriving tourism industry in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region
- Establishment of a taskforce and project management team to simplify the complex management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road
- Development of a business case to plan for the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence

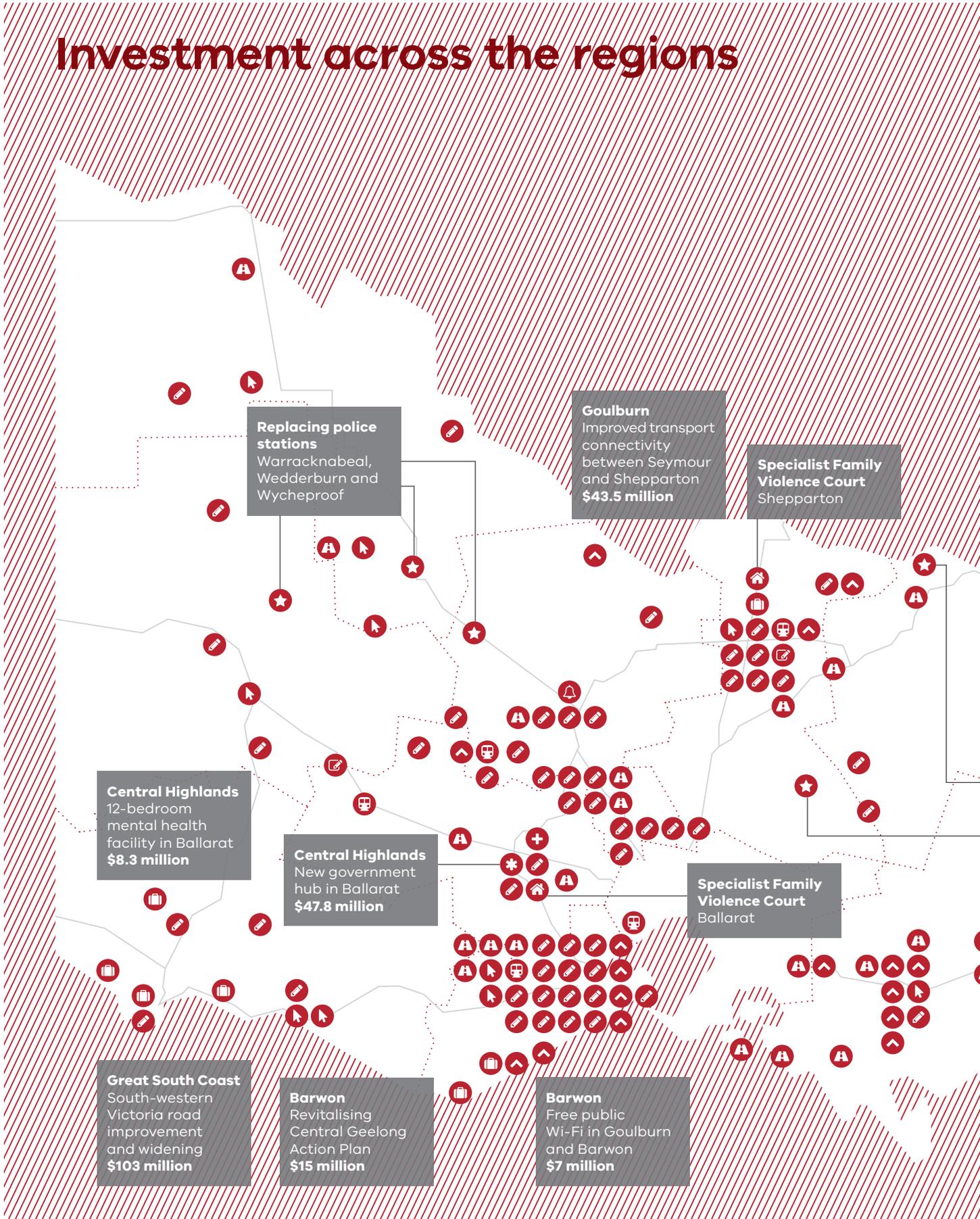
Regional communities have also told us they want to be better connected to the digital world.

The Andrews Labor Government is investing \$45 million to improve digital technology and infrastructure across regional Victoria – a key priority from our Regional Partnerships. This includes:

- \$11 million for the Mobile Black Spots program with a focus on increasing mobile telephone coverage in flood and fire prone areas with poor coverage
- \$12 million for four projects to support the adoption of internet enabled on farm technologies in north-west Victoria, the Macalister Irrigation District, the Murray-Darling Basin and the Serpentine region
- \$7 million for enhanced broadband projects in Morwell, North Geelong, and Horsham
- \$7 million for Digital Economy Plan initiatives to drive innovation and increase the competitiveness of regional industries
- \$7 million for free public Wi-Fi in Shepparton and Geelong
- \$1 million to improve regional services through access to government communications infrastructure



Investment across the regions



-  Road construction work
-  Bridge upgrade
-  Road planning/business case
-  Special school upgrade
-  School planning
-  School upgrades
-  Digital
-  Family violence
-  Police station replacement
-  Rail
-  Major regional investment
-  Health

Regional Partnership Priorities and Connecting Regional Communities

\$29 million for:

- Gippsland Tourism destination management plan
- The design of groundwater pilot projects based on the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District Masterplan
- Swan Hill Riverfront Development Next Stage
- Delivery of the Food and Fibre Action Plan for the Great South Coast region
- Tourism infrastructure upgrades in the Great South Coast and Barwon
- Ovens Murray region cycling infrastructure
- Robinvale shared community library
- Business model development to advance agri-science in the Wimmera Southern Mallee
- Tourism planning for Wimmera Southern Mallee
- Simplifying management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road
- A business case to plan for the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence

A further \$45 million for digital technology and infrastructure

Statewide

- \$1.9 billion for family violence commitment, including \$448 million for Support and Safety Hubs
- Doubling the First Home Owner Grant to \$20 000
- \$316.4 million maintenance for the regional rail network and V/Line fleet
- \$311.1 million for more VLocity carriages
- \$273.3 million for planned burning and greater firefighting capacity
- \$260.3 million to deliver maintenance, improvements and upgrades to regional roads
- \$122 million to secure Victoria's energy supplies
- \$85 million to protect Victoria's agriculture sector from biosecurity risks
- \$84.3 million to upgrade digital technology in our classrooms, including \$16.4 million to boost connectivity in rural and regional schools
- \$25.4 million for emissions reduction initiatives
- \$25 million to support local sporting clubs to upgrade their facilities or develop new ones to boost community sports participation
- \$2 million to subsidise patients travelling to access specialist medical care
- \$1.7 million to re-establish the Rural Women's Network
- \$68.7 million for Stage 3 of the Ice Action Plan
- More than \$2 billion to tackle crime and keep Victorians safe
- Reducing the payroll tax rate by 25 per cent for all businesses operating substantially in regional Victoria

Replacing police stations
Alexandra, Rutherglen and Tangambalanga

Ovens Murray
Cycling infrastructure in the Ovens Murray

Gippsland
Gippsland Rail Upgrade
\$435 million

Gippsland
Establish a timber plantation in the Latrobe Valley
\$110 million

Gippsland
South Gippsland Highway
\$50 million

Creating and protecting jobs in the regions

Since coming to office, the Andrews Labor Government has invested more than \$1.3 billion in regional jobs growth. It's an investment that's working, with 22 500 new jobs created in regional Victoria in 2016. This is more than double the national rate of regional jobs growth, and one of the strongest of all Australian regional areas in both absolute and percentage terms.

But governments don't create jobs alone. Our state needs a strong, thriving regional economy with businesses that create jobs. That's why the Government is reducing the payroll tax rate by 25 per cent for all businesses operating substantially in regional Victoria.

In addition to this cost reduction for businesses, the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* gets on with creating new jobs, driving private sector investment with:

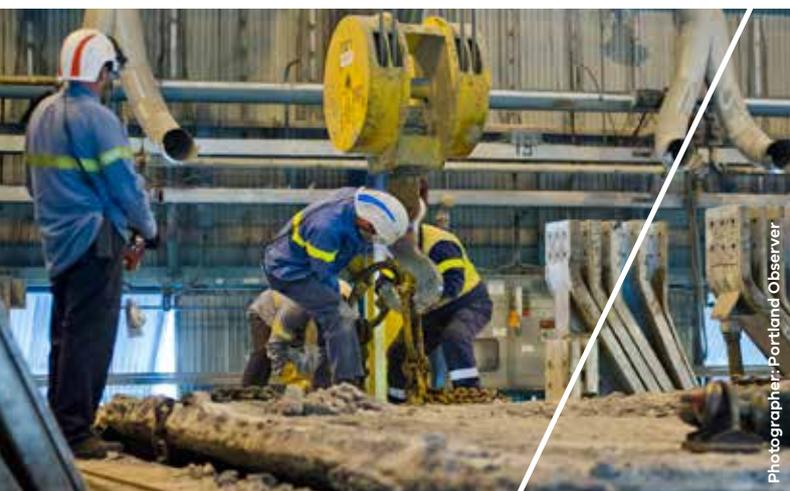
- \$85 million to protect Victoria's agriculture sector from biosecurity risks, and to maintain market access and people's livelihoods
- \$47.8 million to construct a new government hub in Ballarat, which will see a range of government functions and agencies relocated to Ballarat and bring 600 jobs to the region
- \$15 million to expand the Future Industries Manufacturing Program, and the Local Industry Fund for Transition grant program, which supports businesses affected by the exit of the automotive industry, including those in Geelong
- \$500 000 to commence planning for the future of sustainable employment and industry in the Glenelg region

The Budget also invests a further \$106.1 million in creating new jobs and attracting new investment across Victoria. Initiatives that will create jobs across Victoria include:

- \$90 million to attract additional private sector investment in priority sectors, and assist strategically significant manufacturers to manage their exposure to volatility in energy markets
- \$5.8 million to support emerging and existing social enterprises that are key to supporting better job outcomes for Victorians from disadvantaged backgrounds
- \$3.5 million to help small businesses succeed in the digital economy

Together, these initiatives will support the Government's commitment to growing industries, creating jobs and attracting new investment across regional Victoria.

- **Eligible regional Victorian businesses will now have the lowest payroll tax rate in the country**
- **This will benefit around 4 000 regional businesses**



Photographer: Portland Observer



Assistance for the Latrobe Valley

After the closure of Hazelwood, many families in the Latrobe Valley are facing a tough time.

We committed to standing with the region, and that's exactly what we're doing.

That's why last year we committed \$266 million for the Latrobe Valley Assistance Package, and established the Latrobe Valley Authority to partner with the community and businesses to deliver real outcomes for people in the Latrobe Valley. This includes:

- Supporting workers affected by the closure of Hazelwood by providing employment and training services to help them find a job, as well as financial and personal support during this transition
- Working with businesses to create new jobs, including expanding the Back to Work program to provide financial incentives to businesses that train and employ affected workers
- Providing \$50 million for the Latrobe Valley Economic Growth Zone and \$42 million for the Latrobe Valley Authority, and to support workers and businesses in transition, improve opportunities in potential growth areas, and create a better business environment for the Latrobe Valley
- Injecting \$174 million into the infrastructure, education and health priorities for the community through the Latrobe Valley Community Infrastructure and Investment Fund
- Establishing a new government hub in the Latrobe Valley, which will bring 150 government jobs to the region
- Cutting red tape to lower the cost and time required to do business in the Latrobe Valley

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* will further support workers in the Latrobe Valley with:

- \$110 million to establish a timber plantation, to support the long-term sustainability of Victoria's timber harvesting industry
- \$4 million to support workers in the Latrobe Valley to undertake future career planning and development, as well as provide job search assistance and undergo training to help any career transition.

Increasing opportunities in regional communities

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests in tourism, major events and initiatives to keep local economies ticking and create more regional jobs. Key investments include:

- \$24.8 million to increase the reach of Visit Victoria to showcase the best of regional Victoria to Australia and the world, and drive jobs growth in Victoria's visitor economy
- \$25 million to support local sporting clubs to upgrade their facilities or develop new ones to boost community sports participation
- \$15 million to deliver projects in the Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan, including new stormwater infrastructure at Johnstone Park, construction of new laneway connections to Malop Street, planning to expand the Green Spine and new bus infrastructure
- \$5.8 million to increase youth engagement by expanding the Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program, the Regional Presence Project delivered by the Centre for Multicultural Youth in Ballarat and Morwell, and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria in Warrnambool and Swan Hill. The Scouts and Guides program will also be continued for a further four years to increase community participation by young people from culturally diverse and socially and economically disadvantaged communities

Transport

Regional roads

The Andrews Labor Government is upgrading roads across regional Victoria to better connect communities, improve safety, and make it easier to get produce from paddock to port.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* contributes to this goal with \$260.3 million to deliver maintenance, improvements and upgrades to 9 153 000 m² of regional roads.

An additional \$163 million has been provided to undertake resealing, resurfacing and rehabilitation works on:

- Key roads servicing the Port of Portland, including Henty Highway, Portland Ring Road, and the Portland Nelson Road to support freight operations and improve safety in the Green Triangle
- The South Gippsland Highway, which will be realigned east of Koonwarra through the Black Spur with additional corridor improvements between Meeniyah and Yarram
- Roads in south-western Victoria to address the impact of rain and flooding, and reconstruct and resurface 40 km of narrow seal arterial roads

Funding includes \$49.2 million for a package of regional road upgrades to cater for future growth, and improve travel times and safety. Projects include:

- Improving intersection signals on the Bass Highway/Korumburra – Wonthaggi Road
- Resealing pavement on the Shelley Walwa Road
- Delivering intersection improvements on the Western Freeway/Ballarat-Maryborough Road
- Upgrading rest areas on the Hume Freeway, and Princes Highway East
- Improving roundabouts on the Princes Highway East
- Upgrading the Calder Highway
- Delivering intersection improvements on the Western Freeway
- Upgrading traffic signals on the Princes Highway East
- Delivering a new roundabout on Barwon Heads Road, Black Rock Road, and Stacey’s Road;
- Installing shoulder barriers in Fyansford
- Undertaking drainage and barrier works on Lower Duneed Road, Surf Coast Highway to Barwon Heads Road
- Installing shoulder barriers on Cape Otway Road, Princes Highway to Henty Main Road
- Delivering intersection improvements on Gisborne-Kilmore Road/Pierce Road, Gisborne



- Delivering intersection improvements on the Wimmera Highway/Bridgewater-Maldon Road, Newbridge
- Delivering intersection improvements on Heathcote-Kyneton Road/Ennis Road, Edgcombe
- Delivering intersection improvements on the Sunraysia Highway/Birchip-Rainbow Road/McLaughlans Road, Ballapur

In addition to better maintaining and fixing local regional roads, we're building new roads and upgrading roads to better meet demand and increase regional productivity. This is why the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests \$10.2 million to develop a business case and commence pre-construction activities for the Shepparton Bypass, to link the Midland and Goulburn Valley Highways and include a second heavy vehicle crossing of the Goulburn River to divert and reduce heavy

vehicle traffic in the Shepparton CBD. \$7 million will also be provided to construct a new dual-lane roundabout at the intersection of Phillip Island Road and Woolamai Beach Road, Cape Woolamai, to improve traffic flow, access and road safety on Phillip Island.

We're also providing \$40.8 million to upgrade and strengthen bridges, helping regional and rural communities transport goods and create more jobs. The upgrades will enable high productivity freight vehicles to operate on major routes, and will ensure freight operations can continue on other arterial routes, including the Great Ocean Road, South Gippsland Highway, Murray Valley Highway and Bayside Road in Geelong.

Victoria's road safety strategy

Last year the Government announced more than \$1 billion in funding to deliver Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan – Towards Zero 2016-2020 to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on Victoria's roads.

The impacts of road trauma are more prevalent in regional and rural areas, as Victorians are up to four times more likely to be killed on country roads where the speeds are higher and any mistake can have deadly consequences. This is why the Government has prioritised safety improvements on rural and regional roads, including:

- Various safety improvements on the Beechworth-Wodonga Road, the Midland Highway, Princes Highway West, the Calder Highway, and the Western Highway
- Building a continuous barrier on the Hume Freeway from Seymour to Barnawartha
- Building a continuous barrier along the Calder Freeway
- Building a continuous barrier on the Bass Highway from Lang Lang to Anderson
- Building continuous barriers on the Princes Highway East from Bunyip River to Traralgon, and Traralgon to Sale
- Building a continuous barrier on the Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road from Ballan Road to Bacchus Marsh and Heales Road to Granite Road
- Building a continuous barrier from Sale to Maffra
- Building a continuous barrier on the South Gippsland Highway from Leongatha to Meeniyah
- Audio-tactile-line marking and run-off road-crash treatment on the Midland Highway, Korumburra-Wonthaggi Road and Creswick-Newstead Road
- Undertaking pedestrian safety improvements in Geelong and Belmont
- Building an off-road bicycle path from Traralgon to Morwell



Regional public transport

Regional Victorians deserve to have transport options they can rely on. Better rail and public transport in regional Victoria ensures communities are well connected, and all Victorians can get where they need to go, regardless of where they live.

The Andrews Labor Government will invest \$1.12 billion in regional public transport to improve the regional rail network to address growth in demand, improve the reliability of services and give regional towns and cities the infrastructure they deserve.

The Budget invests in more new regional trains, with \$311.1 million for 39 new VLocity carriages, made in Victoria, for Victoria. This builds on the 27 additional VLocity carriages funded last year, and will help deliver more comfortable, frequent and reliable train travel for regional Victorians.

Maintenance on the regional network and V/Line fleet will receive a massive boost to keep passenger and freight services running. This \$316.4 million investment will support regional train punctuality, safety and reliability, and help prevent speed restrictions on regional lines to get regional Victorians where they need to go faster.

\$43.5 million will also be provided to improve transport connectivity between Seymour and Shepparton, with additional coach services and infrastructure to increase train services. A further \$4.4 million has also been provided to expand and upgrade bus services in the Bellarine Peninsula, Ballarat and Wallan, to improve network coverage and provide additional options for public transport users in these areas.

Increasing the number of transport options available to regional passengers is a focus for the Government, and the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* supports connectivity by investing \$193.2 million in the Night Network for the ongoing delivery of 24-hour public transport on weekends. This includes the continued provision of regional coaches to provide safe, reliable transport options for people living in regions accessing the city on a Friday and Saturday night.

With a growing regional population, we are committed to providing significant funding to ensure our regional rail networks run smoothly, reliably and safely. The Government has developed a Regional Rail Revival plan, comprising \$1.5 billion in projects to address the reliability of the regional network and to give regional cities and towns the infrastructure they deserve.

The plan includes \$435 million to be invested in the Gippsland Rail Upgrade, which will create hundreds of jobs. These works include track duplications, crossing loops, station enhancements and 20 level crossing improvements.

Funding of further initiatives under the Regional Rail Revival plan will require the full receipt of Victoria's entitlement under the National Partnership Agreement on Asset Recycling from the Commonwealth Government. Additional projects include:

- The first stage of the new Surf Coast Rail project, a massive new plan to give people in Geelong and the Surf Coast a better rail service, including planning for a spur line to Torquay
- Upgrades to the Warrnambool line to enable more frequent and reliable services
- Upgrades to the Bendigo line, with further upgrades on the Ballarat line to Ararat, which also deliver better services for Maryborough
- Planning for new rolling stock on the North East rail

Education

Regardless of where they live, every Victorian child deserves every chance in life.

It's why we're making big investments to make sure we have the best teachers in our classrooms, the best facilities in our schools and that every child gets the support they need.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests more than \$1.1 billion in our schools, \$196.7 million for early childhood development, and \$12.2 million to support the vocational education and training sector.

This follows the single biggest investment in Victoria's education system in 2016-17, with construction already underway on new and existing schools around the State.

Key initiatives include \$84.1 million to improve principal and teacher capability and ensure students are getting the best education, and \$84.3 million to upgrade digital technology in our classrooms.

\$16.4 million has been provided specifically for the regions to increase digital connectivity in rural and regional schools. This will bring small regional and rural government primary and secondary schools to the same standard of provision as metropolitan schools.



Improving our regional schools

The Andrews Labor Government is investing \$64.1 million to modernise, upgrade and regenerate 59 primary and secondary schools in regional and rural Victoria:

- Ardmona Primary School
- Ashby Primary School
- Ballarat Secondary College - Mount Rowan Campus
- Ballarat Secondary College - Woodmans Hill Campus
- Baringhup Primary School
- Bealiba Primary School
- Bellbrae Primary School
- Big Hill Primary School
- Bolinda Primary School
- Bouchier Street Primary School Shepparton
- Branxholme-Wallacedale Community School
- Carisbrook Primary School
- Castlemaine North Primary School
- Castlemaine Primary School
- Ceres Primary School
- Chilwell Primary School
- Cobains Primary School
- Corryong College
- Darraweit Guim Primary School
- Deans Marsh Primary School
- Dimboola Primary School
- Elphinstone Primary School
- Geelong East Primary School
- Gisborne Primary School
- Hamlyn Banks Primary School
- Harrietville Primary School
- Jamieson Primary School
- Kialla West Primary School
- Kurnai College - Stage 2
- Lara Lake Primary School
- Laharum Primary School
- Leopold Primary School
- Lindenow Primary School
- Lockwood Primary School
- Mansfield Primary School
- Moonambel Primary School
- Mooroopna Park Primary School
- Mount Duneed Regional Primary School
- Mount Macedon Primary School
- Nanneella Estate Primary School
- Newcomb Park Primary School
- Newstead Primary School
- Newtown Primary School
- Oberon Primary School
- Orrvale Primary School
- Penshurst Primary School
- Portland South Primary School
- Queenscliff Primary School
- Seaspray Primary School
- Spring Gully Primary School
- Swan Hill Primary School
- Taradale Primary School
- Tungamah Primary School
- Underbool Primary School
- Wandong Primary School
- Warrnambool East Primary School
- Winchelsea Primary School
- Wunghnu Primary School
- Yaapeet Primary School



A further \$11.9 million will go towards upgrades to the Kalianna Special School and Sale Specialist School.

Additionally, as announced in November 2016, another nine schools will receive funding to upgrade facilities in a targeted school package for the Latrobe Valley, providing vital work in the region:

- Boolarra Primary School
- Churchill Primary School
- Kurnai College – stage 1
- Lowanna College
- Trafalgar High School
- Traralgon (Liddiard Road) Primary School
- Traralgon College
- Tyers Primary School
- Yinnar South Primary School

In addition to the current and soon to be underway upgrades, we need to be building for our future needs and growth. It's why the Andrews Labor Government is acquiring land in Mitchell and Ballarat for new schools in the near future, as well as undertaking work to plan for Stawell Secondary College, and the Shepparton Education Plan.

Regional and rural Victoria will also benefit from a \$75 million investment in new relocatable buildings, \$85 million for the continuation of the School Asbestos Removal program, and \$5.8 million for the School Pride and Sports Fund.

Investing in our kids, early

We know the early years can shape a child's entire life. This is why the Government will invest \$196.7 million to get our youngest learners school ready, and support the learning, development, health and wellbeing of every child.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests:

- \$87.1 million to help disadvantaged children through kindergarten, by providing more targeted and tailored care
- \$12.2 million to support children with a disability by expanding the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program, and continue funding for Early Childhood Intervention Services as Victoria transitions to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- \$6.3 million to expand the Early Start Kindergarten program, which provides free or low cost kindergarten for three-year-old children who are most in need



Looking after all Victorians

Social housing

Not every Victorian is afforded the same opportunities. That is why the Andrews Labor Government is focused on tackling inequality.

This Budget seeks to level the playing field, not by reinforcing dependency, but by promoting opportunity and inclusion.

Across Victoria, our \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund will provide another 2 200 new social housing places over the next five years. In addition to this, we are also investing \$100 million to fund low-cost loans and \$1 billion in government guarantees to housing associations, to expand their stock and increase supply.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* also provides \$37 million in housing assistance to increase and renew social housing supply, and improve crisis accommodation and rooming houses. This statewide funding will benefit rural and regional Victorians and be allocated across these areas based on housing assistance demand.

Housing affordability

Every Victorian deserves the safety and security of a home, but unfortunately, many young Victorians are struggling to afford their first home. To make it more affordable, the Government will invest \$50 million over the next four years to double the First Home Owner Grant to \$20 000 for new homes in regional areas, providing support for around 6 000 regional Victorians to buy their first home. This is in addition to the state-wide abolition of stamp duty for first-time buyers on homes up to \$600 000, with a tapered discount to apply between \$600 000 and \$750 000.

This will help share the benefits of our housing construction boom, and mean more jobs in regional Victoria.

Disability

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* provides \$166.2 million to support greater inclusion for Victorians living with a disability. This includes:

- \$36.3 million to prepare staff, service providers, and systems for this transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- \$19.9 million for Futures for Young Adults, to help young people with a disability develop the skills they need after they leave school
- \$8.7 million to strengthen the existing safeguards and oversight powers of the Disability Services Commissioner to reduce abuse in disability services
- \$7.2 million to extend Early Childhood Intervention Services, improving long-term outcomes for children with disabilities during the transition to the NDIS
- \$4.9 million to tackle the barriers facing Victorians with a disability and promote inclusion, as part of the *State Disability Plan 2017-2020*

Once implemented, the NDIS will change the lives of Victorians with a significant permanent disability.

Concessions

The Budget provides \$81 million to ensure Victorians effected by Commonwealth changes to pension eligibility will continue to be able to access concessions for utility costs, including electricity, gas and water rates.

Family violence

Family violence isn't confined to the boundaries of the city.

Every year it claims the lives of women and children across regional Australia. And every year our system fails to support victims when they need it most.

That's why, before we were elected, we promised we would do everything we could to put an end to family violence.

We committed to implementing all 227 recommendations of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence, and in December 2016, we released *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*.

In last year's Budget, we invested an initial \$572 million to begin work on the most urgent Royal Commission recommendations. This included extra funding for counsellors and prevention programs, as well as an investment in housing and crisis refuges, ensuring victims are not forced to choose between an unsafe home and the streets.

This year's Budget goes even further, with an historic \$1.9 billion to meet the needs of victim survivors, keep them and their children safe and hold perpetrators to account.

Across Victoria we will roll out more specialist family violence services to help victim survivors and their children, provide additional counselling and out-of-hours support, and implement more targeted programs to hold perpetrators to account.

Tragically, many children also experience or witness family violence. To support these children, we are investing in early intervention with \$29.2 million to expand the family services program, which assists vulnerable children and their families. A further \$131.9 million will expand child protection services and placements for children who are unable to live safely with their families.

Key initiatives for rural and regional Victorians include:

- \$448.1 million to establish Support and Safety Hubs, with launch sites including Barwon, Inner Gippsland, and the Mallee to provide a safe place for victim survivors and their children to start their recovery
- \$130.3 million to roll out Specialist Family Violence Courts including at Ballarat and Shepparton. Specialist courts will provide increased safety and support services to victim survivors, as well as programs for perpetrators including mandated Men's Behaviour Change Programs

Together, this reform package will save lives and bring about enduring change.



Health

Regional health

It shouldn't matter where you live. Every Victorian should be able to rely on the best of health care, close to home.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests an additional \$2.9 billion in Victoria's health system, so families in rural and regional areas can receive high-quality care when they need it. Regional communities will benefit from:

- \$8.3 million to establish a new 12-bedroom mental health facility in Ballarat to increase support for people with an acute mental health illness living in Ballarat and the broader Grampians region
- \$7.5 million to undertake planning and preliminary infrastructure works to South West Healthcare in Warrnambool to deliver the next stage of upgrades. This will support our doctors and nurses as they continue to provide the best health care to people in the south west

Across the state, emergency departments, intensive care units, maternity admissions, specialist clinics, palliative care, sub-acute care facilities, cancer services, and ambulance services will receive significant funding boosts with the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* committing:

- \$1.3 billion for frontline services, so patients get the treatment they need sooner
- \$428.5 million to provide infrastructure works our hospitals need
- \$319.9 million to improve access to elective surgery and reduce patient waiting times
- \$215.0 million to put patient safety first, eliminate avoidable harm and improve the quality of health care across the State

- \$26.5 million for new paramedics and new ambulances, and an additional \$2 million to subsidise costs for people from regional areas when they travel to access specialist medical care
- \$14 million to deliver more cancer screening and detection measures, including funding to provide 10 000 additional breast screens, increase the number of Victorians participating in the National Bowel Cancer Screening program, and deliver a training program for oral health professionals to identify oral cancers during routine check-ups

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* also recognises that at the same time as we focus on immediate need, we also need to be looking to the future. This includes:

- \$34.2 million for health services and medical research institutes so they expand their research into the next great breakthroughs
- \$12.7 million to trial a more integrated and coordinated approach to caring for people with multiple chronic and complex conditions
- \$10 million to expand the Better Care Victoria Innovation Fund for the delivery of public hospital-led improvement and innovation projects, so that those closest to the system can continue to lead its reform

This builds on the \$200 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund from last year's Budget, which is being rolled out across the regions to make health services in regional areas more reliable and comfortable for patients.

Reducing the negative impacts of ice, drugs and alcohol

Regional Victoria is being hit hard by a substance abuse epidemic.

That's why this Budget includes stage 3 of our Ice Action Plan, building on the \$103.1 million already invested in the past two budgets. It's why the Government has introduced tough new laws that ban the sale and production of all synthetic drugs, as well as giving police greater powers to prosecute ice traffickers and crack down on dealers.

At the same time, the Government is also committed to providing the best treatment possible to help people and families afflicted by addiction to get their lives back on track. This is why the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* is investing \$9.7 million to start capital planning and purchase of three new regional residential drug rehabilitation treatment facilities in the Gippsland, Hume and Barwon regions.

This is in addition to \$68.7 million in statewide initiatives to:

- Expand services for people during transition in and out of alcohol and other drug treatment
- Increase phone and web-based support, which will provide earlier access to alcohol and drug services for people who are unable to access face-to-face services
- Establish 30 new alcohol and drug rehabilitation beds to increase the capacity of residential rehabilitation services by an additional 85 patients per year
- Continue the trial of the Family Drug Treatment Court and provide additional counselling and treatment services for up to 3 800 parents a year to reunite families impacted by addiction
- Provide a further 960 places for people with mandatory treatment conditions in their Community Corrections Orders
- Better capture and share information between alcohol and other drug treatment services to build better treatment options



Community safety

Police

Every Victorian deserves to feel safe.

Crime has been rising over the past six years, and something had to be done.

The Andrews Labor Government has a clear law and order plan, taking a stand to tackle crime and keep Victorians safe.

Victoria Police will get the powers and resources they need – everything they have asked for to stop crime and reduce harm.

This Budget fully funds our Community Safety Statement, and provides more than a \$2 billion boost to Victoria Police so they can put victims first, and put criminals behind bars.

This investment includes more than 2 700 new sworn police officers, including 415 specialist family violence officers.

It will increase community safety all across Victoria through:

- Preventing and detecting the crimes that cause the most harm and trauma in the community
- Increasing connection to the community to prevent and disrupt crime
- Putting victims first through increased support programs
- Holding offenders to account by backing Victoria Police with the tools, powers and laws it needs to keep Victorians safe
- Improving the capabilities of Victoria Police by providing them with the technology and training required to respond to changing crime and community needs

In particular, the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* will ensure regional and rural Victorians have a visible local police presence in their communities by replacing and upgrading stations in Alexandra, Rutherglen, Tangambalanga, Warracknabeal, Wedderburn and Wycheproof.

Justice for all

In addition to the record boost to Police, the Government is addressing the safety of our communities at all levels, from crime prevention and neighbourhood policing, through to the criminal justice, prison and rehabilitation systems.

This Budget helps ensure perpetrators are held to account and detained safely and effectively to keep Victorians safe. This is why the Government has invested almost \$1.1 billion in the judicial, corrections and youth justice systems, including:

- \$360.7 million to strengthen youth justice facilities and build a new high-security youth justice centre
- \$308.1 million to bolster security around high-risk offenders, including detention and supervision schemes, and targeted intervention for serious offenders in custody
- \$145.2 million to fund the needs of the expanded prison system, ensuring prisoner, staff and community safety, and reducing the likelihood of reoffending
- \$122.9 million to improve public safety and care for the needs of offenders with mental illness
- \$41.1 million for rehabilitation programs and services to respond to recidivism and improve community safety, including an anti-radicalisation program
- \$29.5 million to support Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres to continue to meet the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable Victorians

While the Government's overall investment in the judicial and corrections systems will provide statewide benefits, specific investments in regional and rural areas will improve access to justice at a local level. This includes funding to develop plans for addressing current and future demand pressures at the Bendigo Law Courts so cases can be heard sooner, and to safely separate accused offenders from the public.

Emergency services

Bushfires and natural disasters are a reality of life for Victoria's rural and regional communities.

That is why we've made significant investments in the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* to ensure our firefighters are equipped and ready to respond.

This includes \$273.3 million to implement *Safer Together*, which will reduce the impact of bushfires on Victorian communities. Activities include planned burning and greater forest firefighting capacity for the fire season.

To reduce the risk and size of bushfires, we also need a responsive emergency communications system. This is why the Budget has committed:

- \$42.8 million to assist Triple Zero respond to emergency call-taking services and upgrade the dispatch system to better relay information to emergency service organisations
- \$17.1 million to continue the national telephone warning system that allows emergency services to send messages to landlines and mobile phones about emergencies

As part of the \$34.3 million investment in critical assets and infrastructure, the Victoria SES headquarters in Corio and Wangaratta will be redeveloped so they can continue to serve these regional communities into the future.

These initiatives will work together to improve our response to fires and natural disasters.



Protecting and embracing Victoria's environmental assets

Our environment is the foundation for everything – our state, our economy, our health and wellbeing.

The protection of Victoria's forests and wildlife will be strengthened through improved regulatory compliance and enforcement. This will involve responding to illegal rubbish dumping in state forests, investigating breaches of timber harvesting regulations and addressing the illegal trade in endangered Victorian animals.

Our vulnerable habitats will also be protected and our native flora and fauna preserved, through targeted actions including revegetation, as well as predator control and pest control.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* will also improve Victoria's parks by providing \$31.8 million for up to 60 additional rangers. The Parks Victoria website will also be redeveloped to encourage people to take advantage of and see all the benefits Victorian parks have to offer.

A substantial investment of \$162.5 million will be made to modernise the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). This includes increasing the EPA's enforcement and environmental health capabilities.

Greater investment will also be made in the waste and resource recovery sector, generating jobs in regional areas. Steps will also be taken to keep e-waste out of landfill and foster Victoria's emerging waste-to-energy market.

Water

Effective management and supply of Victoria's water resources is critical. This is particularly true for regional and rural areas, which rely on a sustainable water supply for a large number of their industries.

Achieving our water resource management objectives and ensuring long-term resource sustainability is an ongoing and iterative process. The Government has provided an additional \$115.7 million to:

- Progressively transition rural communities to the Victorian Rural Drainage Strategy, which aims to reduce waterlogging on agricultural land and improve agricultural productivity
- Protect the Ramsar wetlands through additional monitoring of the wetlands' ecological character, dedicated coordination of each site and strengthened site management
- Strengthen Victoria's water entitlement and planning processes through simplifying regulation, improving the compliance and enforcement regime, and commencing the long-term water resource assessment process and sustainable water strategy reviews



- Improve the quality, accuracy and availability of water-monitoring data through investment in infrastructure upgrades and new technology
- Revise the State Environment Protection Policy to provide updated guidance on protecting and rehabilitating water environments
- Facilitate research and programs that address challenges for water management arising from a growing population

Waterways do not only support regional industries, but are also meant to be enjoyed, and the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* recognises the recreational values of Victorian waterways. That is why \$3.5 million will be provided to improve the availability of information about the environmental condition of waterways so recreational users can better plan for activities such as water skiing, rowing and fishing. Additional water will also be pumped into the Anglesea River over summer to address lower water flows, and ensure it is available for a range of recreational uses.



Agriculture

Victorian farmers contribute close to \$12 billion a year to the Victorian economy, and the Government is focused on the continued growth of this critical sector.

This is why the Andrews Labor Government invested \$200 million in 2015 to establish the Agriculture, Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to drive economic growth, create jobs, boost exports and support Victorian farmers.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* will provide additional funding to ensure this growth is sustainable and supported. Key initiatives include:

- \$44.4 million to protect Victoria's agriculture sector from biosecurity risks, and to maintain market access and people's livelihoods
- \$21.5 million to introduce electronic identification technology for sheep and goats to ensure producers can reduce risks to market access, trade and human health from a disease or food safety emergency
- \$19.2 million to eradicate the red imported fire ant, before it becomes a threat to all of Australia
- \$1.7 million to re-establish the Rural Women's Network, which will support the participation of women in leadership roles through education and skills development, mentoring and networking opportunities
- Removing insurance duties on policies that insure agricultural products against damage from flood, fire and other accidental provisions to reduce costs for farmers and primary producers

This investment is in addition to \$45 million in improved digital technology and infrastructure. This includes \$12 million for four projects to support internet-enabled on-farm technology, to help drive innovation in agriculture.

Climate change

Climate change will impact every Victorian, but its effects will be felt more acutely in regional and rural areas, which depend on a healthy agricultural sector.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* provides \$25.4 million for emissions reduction initiatives, and the production of detailed climate change impact projections to support our regions to adapt to climate change through communicating specific impacts and priorities. Local governments will also be assisted to reduce their emissions.

Resources and energy

The Andrews Labor Government has banned fracking for good, to protect our regional and rural communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* also brings energy efficiency and affordability to the everyday lives of all Victorians.

This Budget provides Victorians with a stable, affordable and secure supply of energy for industry, businesses and homes, by providing more than \$122 million to secure Victoria's energy supplies, create a clean sustainable economy, and, importantly, create jobs. This includes:

- \$88.8 million to continue the Government's plan to modernise Victoria's energy system and ensure the electricity network is stable, reliable and affordable
- \$23.7 million to help households and business to manage their energy usage and compare energy prices. The Government will also use this funding to continue to advocate for Victorian consumers' interests at the national level

The Budget also invests \$42.5 million in the Victorian Gas Program. This will ensure the best environmental, social and geological science, and thorough consultation with communities, inform future decisions on conventional gas exploration in Victoria.



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