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A BUDGET THAT PUTS PEOPLE FIRST

Unprecedented. Tough. Unrelenting. There's plenty of ways to put it – but 2020 has been a year like no other. As we begin our recovery, we need a Budget like no other too. The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* delivers an unprecedented investment to rebuild our state – and make sure Victorians recover too.

It also seeks to respond to some of the deep cracks in our economy and in our society. Cracks that existed before the pandemic, but that have been thrown into even sharper relief.

A mental health system that is broken. An economy that forces workers to choose between their health and feeding their family. Too many Victorians without the security and stability of a home.

This year has also shown us what matters most: our families, our neighbours, our communities. Taking care of the people we love and looking after each other. It's why this Budget does exactly that – it looks after people.

At the heart of that effort is getting Victorians back into work. The Andrews Labor Government's Budget funds up to \$49 billion in the things that matter to Victorians - and our economic recovery. Central to this investment is our Jobs Plan, which sets an ambitious goal: creating 400,000 jobs by 2025 – half of them by 2022.

This includes Jobs for Victoria, a \$619 million investment that will help those most impacted by the pandemic: women, young people and Victorians without a formal qualification, but plenty of experience. This includes \$250 million to partner with employers to subsidise the wages of at least 10,000 new workers.

At least \$150 million of that wage subsidy support will go towards employing women – and \$50 million of that for women over the age of 45, recognising the additional barriers they face, both before and during the pandemic. Further funding will provide one-on-one support for those workers who need it most – whether that's training advice, career counselling or even help to update their resume.

We'll also make it easier to retrain and upskill, with \$1 billion to support our skills sector, including an extra 80,000 Free TAFE and training places with courses linked to jobs in demand – giving Victorians a clear pathway to a new career.

As part of the Big Housing Build, our \$5.3 billion investment will also make sure more Victorians have the security and stability of a home, delivering 12,000 new social and affordable homes. This investment will also help more Victorians into work, supporting around 10,000 new jobs on average each year over the next four years, with 25 per cent of investment dedicated to regional Victoria.

This Budget also plays to our strengths – investing in the industries and the people that have always been pivotal to our state's success. That includes the new \$2 billion Breakthrough Victoria Fund, cementing our position as an international leader in innovation, and creating a pipeline of more than 15,700 jobs over 10 years.

A further \$1.6 billion investment in clean energy and energy efficiency will also help power our state's recovery. This includes establishing six new Renewable Energy Zones, dedicated areas to power our state – and create new

jobs, particularly in regional Victoria. This also includes the Budget's \$797 million investment to help Victorians cover the cost of their power bills and make homes more energy efficient.

This Budget will also help our state embrace new technology – and make it one of Victoria's strengths. The Labor Government will deliver the \$626 million Digital Future Now package, radically improving mobile coverage and broadband access in regional communities, while supporting businesses to grow and creating new jobs.

This includes \$250 million to co-fund business-grade broadband connectivity for suburbs and regional towns, \$300 million to eradicate mobile black spots in populated areas, and \$64 million for the Digital Skills and Jobs Program – putting Victorians looking for work at the centre of our digital future – with training, internships and opportunities for employment.

We'll also continue our massive infrastructure investment, building our state for the future while also creating thousands of jobs for Victorian workers. This includes kicking off work on Stage One of the Suburban Rail Loop and delivering \$2 billion for Geelong Fast Rail, supporting more than 2800 jobs at the peak of construction.

But it's not just enough to recover. We want to recover fairer and stronger too. It's why we'll make fundamental reforms: ensuring an inclusive education for kids with disability, investing in free kinder in 2021, delivering new school tutors, a new Recovery Workforce, and more healthcare delivered in the home.

It also means making sure workers aren't forced to choose between their health and feeding their families. This pandemic has made clear just how real that choice is for far too many Victorians in insecure work. That's why the Labor Government will develop a new Secure Work Pilot Scheme. Once in place, the pilot will provide up to five days of sick and carers pay at the national minimum wage for casual or insecure workers in the most vulnerable industries.

We'll continue our massive rebuild of our schools with a \$1.9 billion building blitz, with our investment in school infrastructure expected to support more than 6,400 jobs across the state. And to make sure more students have the technology they need at home, the Budget invests more than \$24.5 million so students can keep the more than 71,000 mobile devices loaned to them during the coronavirus pandemic.

This year has reaffirmed – nothing matters more than your health and the health of the people you love. It's why this Budget delivers \$2 billion to build new hospitals and upgrading existing ones, including \$384.2 million to redevelop Warrnambool Hospital and \$75 million to buy land and to commence early works for the new Melton Hospital.

The Budget also delivers a brand-new \$200 million Metropolitan Health Infrastructure Fund to fund upgrades across our suburban health services, while investing a further \$120 million in our landmark Regional Health Infrastructure Fund – bringing its total funding figure to \$470 million.

We'll also continue our work to fix our broken mental health system, with nearly \$870 million to extend mental health services to more Victorians and implement the Royal Commission into Mental Health's interim recommendations. This investment will help more Victorians as we begin our state's recovery, with new beds, more staff and dedicated one-on-one support for those most in need.

In order to help fund these investments, Victoria will make use of record low interest rates – borrowing now to ensure our state can rebuild sooner and stronger.

Because as we recover, our success must be measured not just by the wealth of our economy and but by the wellbeing of our people. This is a Budget to rebuild, recover and make us stronger than before. This is a Budget that puts people first.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“A job is worth more than just a pay cheque. A job means security and stability – for you and the people you love. It’s why the heart of this Budget is dedicated to creating new jobs and getting Victorians back into work.”

“There is no real recovery from this pandemic unless we face up to the deep cracks its exposed and do something about them. Victorians deserve nothing less.”

Quotes attributable to Treasurer Tim Pallas

“This is a Budget for our time – acknowledging the incredible damage that’s been done by this global pandemic, but also making a commitment to rebuild our state stronger and fairer.”