

Victorian Budget 2020/21

Putting People First



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Premier

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Tuesday 24 November 2020

PUTTING REGIONAL 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 help our state recover – and make sure no community and no Victorian is left behind.

We know that requires getting regional Victorians back into work. The 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 help cover 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 also want to make sure we're investing in the future industries that will create jobs in our regional communities – now and for the long-term.

That includes a \$1.6 billion investment in clean energy and energy efficiency to help power our state's recovery. With six new Renewable Energy Zones, these dedicated areas will power our state – from sunny Mildura to the windy east coast – while also supporting businesses, communities and jobs across regional Victoria.

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

This includes \$300 million to eradicate Mobile Black Spots in populated areas of regional Victoria and \$250 million to co-fund business-grade broadband connectivity for regional communities through the Gigabit State program.

This investment will improve the availability of reliable high-speed fibre optic and wireless broadband services for regional businesses, while also supporting 2000 jobs. The \$64 million Digital Skills and Jobs Program will also put regional Victorians looking for work at the centre of our digital future – with training, internships and opportunities for employment.

And to make sure more Victorian families can experience the best our state has to offer – while also backing local economies and local jobs – the Budget invests \$465 million in the Victorian Tourism Recovery Package. This includes the Gippsland Tourism Recovery Package and new funding for the Mallee’s Silo Art projects, as well as 120,000 vouchers each worth \$200 to entice more people to visit and stay in regional Victoria.

Having put food on the table for Victorian families throughout the pandemic, a \$65 million investment will back Victoria’s farmers, growers and producers, with our state’s new agriculture strategy. This investment will deliver better infrastructure and new technology to help our farmers connect with new markets around the world. The industry will also benefit from our new \$2 billion Breakthrough Victoria Fund, with agri-food one of its dedicated focus areas. A further \$50 million will upgrade our ag colleges at Dookie, Longerenong and Marcus Oldham College, and supports TAFEs and other bodies to deliver best-practice education and training for the agriculture innovators of tomorrow.

The Labor Government also continues its proud record of investment for regional Victoria, building our state while also supporting thousands of jobs for Victorian workers. A massive \$4.7 billion investment will build, upgrade and maintain regional Victoria’s road and rail, including Geelong Fast Rail, Stage Three on the Shepparton Rail Line Upgrade and Stage Two of the Warrnambool Rail Line Upgrade.

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will continue to deliver crucial local projects championed by local communities with a \$156 million investment.

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 regional Victorians in insecure work. That’s why the Labor Government will develop a new Secure Work Pilot, providing up to five days of sick and carers pay at the national minimum wage for casual or insecure workers in the most vulnerable industries.

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. With 25 per cent of investment dedicated to regional Victoria, this funding will also help more Victorians into work with supporting around 10,000 new jobs on average each year over the next four years.

We’ll continue our massive rebuild of our regional schools with a statewide building blitz, delivering two new regional school campuses, upgrades at 44 regional schools and improvements for ten specialist schools in regional Victoria. Not only will this investment deliver great local schools – it’ll create good local jobs, with our school infrastructure build expected to support more than 6,400 jobs across the state.

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 upgrade existing ones, including \$384 million to redevelop Warrnambool Hospital, \$7.6 million for Wangaratta Hospital to expand its maternity services and an extra \$120 million for our landmark Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which has already delivered hundreds of local projects across our state.

This Budget will also ensure Victorians have the mental health support they need as we get on with fixing a broken system, with nearly \$870 million. This investment includes new Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) locations in Warrnambool and Mildura – plus extra clinical capacity for existing sites in Albury Wodonga and Ballarat.

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 by the wealth of our economy and 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 regional Victorians back into work.”

“This pandemic reached every corner of our state. Our recovery needs to do the same.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

“This budget delivers on the things that are most important to regional Victorians and puts us in the strongest position possible to recover from drought, bushfires and the pandemic.”

“Whether it’s investing in our country hospitals, schools, businesses or farms, we are a government that wants to make regional Victoria stronger than ever before and an even greater place to live, work and visit.”