



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier

Tuesday 24 November 2020

PUTTING NORTH EAST VICTORIANS 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.

It starts right here in North East Victoria, where the Labor Government will build more social housing, expand maternity accommodation to support mums and bubs, improve tourism experiences and upgrade even more schools.

At the heart of that effort is getting 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 subsidise the wages of up to 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.

The Budget invests \$1.5 billion in new tax relief for Victorian businesses and families.

This builds on the Andrews Labor Government's existing support, with a total of more than \$3.5 billion in tax and fees relief to Victorian workers, businesses and households to help them through the pandemic and recovery.

It includes the New Jobs Tax Credit, which supports those small and medium businesses that rehire staff, restore hours or create new jobs.

Under the plan, these businesses will get a tax credit of ten cents for every dollar it increases taxable Victorian wages – giving businesses the confidence they need to open their doors, hire more staff and re-emerge from the pandemic.

In a bid to lure businesses to regional Victoria, a 50 per cent stamp duty concession on the purchase of commercial and industrial properties will be brought forward to January 2021 – encouraging more businesses to open, relocate or expand, and helping our hard-hit regional economies bounce back. This investment will save businesses a further \$39.6 million.

This year has reaffirmed that nothing matters more than your health and the health of the people you love. It's why this Budget delivers more than \$2 billion to build, expand and modernise hospitals and health services across the state, including an extra \$120 million for our landmark Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which has already delivered hundreds of local projects across our state.

We're investing \$7.6 million to refurbish and expand maternity accommodation in Wangaratta, as well as installing other critical infrastructure, like essential clinical systems, generators and electrical upgrades.

A share in a \$4.4 million investment will create residential beds for those recovering from alcohol and drug dependencies across Wangaratta.

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 an expansion of Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement capacity at the Albury Wodonga facility.

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 to help drive Victoria's recovery. With six new Renewable Energy Zones, including one in the North East, these dedicated hubs 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 Labor Government will deliver the \$626 million Digital Future Now package, 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 to attract more visitors to regional Victoria through the Victorian Tourism Recovery Package. This includes \$15 million to create an iconic facilitated walk across the high plains between the Falls Creek and Mt Hotham ski resorts, establishing it as one of the leading nature-based tourism destinations with year-round appeal.

Another \$4.32 million for better signs and large-scale outdoor works will help lure more visitors to Prosecco Road.

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 Breakthrough Victoria Fund, with a dedicated focus on agribusiness.

The Labor Government also continues its proud record of investment for regional Victoria, building our state while also creating thousands of jobs for Victorian workers, including a safety upgrade for Nimmo Bridge near Myrtleford.

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, 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 Scheme, providing up to five days of sick and carers pay at the national minimum wage for casual or insecure workers in priority industries.

Our \$6 billion Big Housing Build will also make sure more Victorians have the security and stability of a home, delivering 12,000 new social and affordable homes. A quarter of this investment is dedicated to regional Victoria, including at least \$30 million guaranteed for Wodonga and \$20 million for Wangaratta. This funding will also help more Victorians into work, 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. It includes upgrades for Falls Creek and Beechworth primary schools, Wodonga Middle Years College, Myrtleford P-12 College and \$1.79 million for Cobram and District Specialist School so they can convert the car park into a playground and sensory garden.

Not only will this investment deliver great local schools – it'll create good local jobs, with our school infrastructure build expected to create more than 6,400 jobs across the state.

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 people in the North East back into work."

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

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

"This is a Budget that puts people and communities first – it delivers better housing, better health and better outcomes for residents across the North East."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"Whether it is new social housing or upgrades to encourage more tourists to the area, we're helping locals not only get back on their feet – but recover better and stronger than before."