



The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources

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BACKING A RECOVERY MADE IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

This year, we've seen our farmers, growers and producers for what they are – essential. It's why we are investing \$115 million to further support the agriculture industry, while also backing our regional communities and the people who call them home.

Whether you work on a farm or in a rural town or major centre, in big business or small, the Andrews Labor Government is listening to regional Victorians – and has responded with the *Victorian Budget 2020/21*.

To help farmers continue to adapt, take advantage of new technology and remain internationally competitive, the Budget provides \$65 million support for a range of initiatives that will increase the use of technology, improve infrastructure across the supply chain and boost energy efficiency on our farms.

The investment will be underpinned by a new strategy that responds to the challenges facing our farmers and positions Victorian agriculture for future growth.

Delivering on our promise to support the next generation of farmers, the Budget invests \$50 million to improve facilities at agricultural colleges to ensure more young Victorians have the skills they need for lifelong and rewarding careers in the industry.

Drought, bushfire and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic have had a huge impact on farming communities. To help access financial hardship support and rebuild stronger, the Budget provides \$2.1 million for the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

Across the state, our flagship Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will continue to create more jobs and support more community projects, thanks to a \$156 million boost from the Budget. This Fund has the voices of regional Victorians at its heart – delivering the local projects that our communities tell us they need.

This Budget will invest \$10 million through the Coronavirus Short-Term Regional Recovery initiative to address the most urgent recovery needs of regional communities – guided by our Regional Partnerships.

And to ensure country kids can get the skills they need for the local jobs of the future, the Labor Government is investing \$4.2 million, giving us greater understanding of the needs of local industry and making sure local TAFEs and training providers offer these courses to their communities.

This Budget delivers a further \$125 million to continue the work of Regional Development Victoria and the Latrobe Valley Authority in supporting jobs, skills and infrastructure that will drive the recovery of local communities and local economies.

The Andrews Labor Government is backing regional recovery efforts with important investment in regional tourism, our regional health providers, digital connectivity and arts and culture projects – to encourage job growth and make country Victoria an even better place to live, work, visit and invest.

Pet welfare also remains a priority for the Government, with the Budget providing \$11 million to continue enforcing important puppy farm and pet shop reforms, including the Pet Exchange Register and commercial dog breeder scheme.

We'll rehome more pets with \$5.2 million in support and a further \$2.9 million will go towards horse and pony rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming, and organisations that provide free or heavily subsidised de-sexing of cats and dogs for disadvantaged Victorians.

Regional investment and jobs will get a \$42.6 million boost across Victoria's minerals sector, including \$5 million for the orderly restart of the onshore conventional gas industry, supporting vital jobs and economic development for regional communities.

To help further develop the resources industry, the Budget has \$16.5 million to enable the regulation of the increased activity – looking for new low emission industries, boosting minerals exploration and ensuring affordable quarry materials for the state's infrastructure boom.

The Budget also provides \$21.1 million to address mine and quarry rehabilitation risks, including funding for the new Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority and Earth Resources Regulation.

Landholders and communities across the state will be supported to reduce the potentially devastating impact of pests like Queensland Fruit Fly, foxes, and wild dogs with more than \$8.2 million in funding.

Responsible and sustainable recreational hunting brings millions of dollars to Victoria's economy. Funding of \$5.3 million will deliver a second *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* to further promote responsible hunting in Victoria.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Regional Development and Resources Jaclyn Symes

"Bushfires, drought and the impacts of coronavirus have hit regional Victoria hard. That's why we're investing in the things that matter to local communities – like jobs, skills and support to get through the tough times."

"This Budget continues to back our farmers through new technology, education and innovation – supporting them to create new jobs, find new markets and put food on the table for families across the state."