

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



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BESPOKE PROJECTS TAKE HIGH COUNTRY CYCLING TO NEXT LEVEL

The High Country's reputation as a top-rung cycling tourism destination will receive a further boost, with new support confirmed by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today announced a \$2.5 million second round of grants from the *Ride High Country Fund*, which is helping local businesses attract visitors and increase demand for cycling in the region.

The Labor Government will provide grants of up to \$500,000 through a new streamlined process, making it easier for businesses to apply and open their doors to cyclists sooner.

The injection follows the successful first round of funding, which supported five new and established businesses to either start up or expand their offerings including accommodation and hospitality operations to support cyclists before and after they tackle the roads and trails.

Former professional mountain bike racer Miles Davis was a recipient of the first round of funding and plans to establish a conferencing and events centre, with a cycling focus, in Bright.

First-round grants totalled \$1.9 million – the combined *Ride High Country Fund* investment of \$4.4 million will trigger an extra \$2 million in private investment and create an estimated 65 full-time equivalent jobs.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the High Country was experiencing strong tourism growth, attracting 3.8 million visitors who spent \$1.1 billion each year, and strong numbers have returned to the region in the first months of 2021.

The Labor Government has also supported cycle tourism in the High Country through the *Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Grants* under the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments' \$68.6 million *Local Economic Recovery* program.

Cycling tourism business Bright Velo received funding through this program to transform its accommodation facility to complement the region's cycling tourism boom. The project incorporates updated lodgings, bike storage, gymnasium, function room and wine bar.

Applications for the second round of the *Ride High Country Fund* close on Thursday, 10 June 2021.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"This fund will boost North East Victoria's reputation as one of Australia's premier cycling destinations. It will create jobs and generate millions of dollars of investment for the region."

Quote attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula

"These projects will significantly increase two-wheel tourism in Bright and surrounding areas, which is great news for businesses of all kinds."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes

"The High Country has some of the most beautiful, challenging and enjoyable trails in Victoria – I'm really proud to be backing cycling projects that attract more visitors to the regions and put money back into the local economy."

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