

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
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FAST TRACK: FOOD AND FIBRE MANUFACTURING BOOST FOR THE VALLEY

The Andrews Labor Government is investing in Latrobe Valley jobs and supporting the growth of Gippsland's successful food and fibre sector with major new funding to fast-track a new food manufacturing hub.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* will provide \$10 million for the Morwell Food Manufacturing Precinct to enable the centre to manage greater water and energy demands – creating the conditions for businesses to invest with confidence and boosting employment opportunities for locals.

Works will include vital construction upgrades such as the connection of power, water and sewage along with building better access to the site to help facilitate the movement of heavy vehicles and manufacturing equipment.

The investment will further strengthen Gippsland's \$7 billion food and fibre sector and continue to support the long-term prosperity of the region as its economy diversifies.

The new precinct is located next to a Bega Cheese fresh yogurt processing facility, which demonstrates the commercial viability of food manufacturing in the region. As critical mass develops, this will create more demand for specialised agribusiness and boost manufacturing jobs.

At 89 hectares, the site will be able to accommodate up to 44 prime industrial lots and will create jobs for locals during construction – with the potential to support 1,700 ongoing manufacturing jobs once up and running.

The Labor Government backed the Latrobe Valley with a \$266 million package to stimulate economic growth, create jobs and grow local businesses following the closure of Hazelwood Power Station and since late 2016, more than 3,000 jobs have been created in the region.

The Labor Government has also supported the Latrobe Valley with almost \$400 million in projects that are generating more jobs for locals – giving them and their families greater stability and certainty.

A further \$470 million was announced in last year's Budget towards projects in Gippsland, including \$2 million for the Latrobe Creative Precinct, \$95 million for social and affordable housing in Latrobe City and Baw Baw Shire, and \$241 million to complete the duplication of the Princes Highway between Traralgon and Sale.

Continued strong investment will provide opportunities for workers across the Latrobe Valley, including those at Yallourn power plant, as that operation transitions to closure over the next seven years.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We promised to back Latrobe Valley workers and that's what we're doing – the investments we have made will deliver the services and support locals need, while at the same time creating new local jobs."

"This \$10 million project will boost vital manufacturing capacity and act as a catalyst for wider economic development and jobs growth."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing

"Morwell is moving ahead – investments like this build momentum and create a future of new and emerging industries with a spread of jobs and opportunities. I look forward to seeing the Food Manufacturing Precinct take shape and businesses moving in."

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