

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
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SUPPORTING WORKERS TO MAKE A MOVE TO REGIONAL VICTORIA

The Andrews Labor Government is backing regional businesses and industries to attract critical workers through new investments to tackle housing shortages and other barriers to regional workforce attraction.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today announced statewide initiatives to support worker shortages including a \$5 million investment for *Regional Workforce Pilots*.

The pilots have been developed to tackle housing shortages and other barriers to regional workforce attraction, which is threatening economic recovery and growth.

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in unprecedented numbers of people moving from metropolitan Melbourne to regional and rural Victoria, increasing demand on the already tight housing market in many areas.

This is demonstrated by recent data highlighting regional Victoria's extremely low vacancy rate of 1.2 per cent, low turnover rate of 7.7 per cent and a year on year decline in new lettings - down by more than 20 per cent.

The pilots will include targeted and localised support in four areas of regional Victoria experiencing high demand for workers and increasing challenges in attracting them. Pilots will be in the region surrounding Ararat in the Grampians, along the Great South Coast, the High Country, and at Robinvale in northern Victoria.

In the Grampians, the Ararat East Development Zone will be established to prepare the site for a future housing development. The pilot will develop homes for an additional 317 people, creating 134 full time equivalent jobs during construction. On top of the pilots, the Government is investing a further \$300,000 in the Ararat East Development Zone through the *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF)*.

The *Regional Workforce Pilots* are part of the Government's almost \$30 billion investment in regional and rural Victoria since 2015, supporting thousands of jobs and contributing to the lowest regional unemployment rate in the nation.

More than \$3 million in funding has been also been provided by the Labor Government to support other immediate interventions identified by regional businesses and councils to support workforce attraction to improve housing.

These include \$550,000 for the continuation of the OPAN initiative to fill up to 1,000 unskilled positions, \$825,000 to Tourism North East to plan for long-term affordable housing and more than \$410,000 for Buloke Council to establish a housing development at Sea Lake.

The *Regional Workforce Pilots* and regional housing initiatives build on the Government's historic \$5.3 billion *Big Housing Build* to construct more than 12,000 new secure and modern, social and affordable homes throughout the state – with \$1.25 billion being invested in regional Victoria.

For more information about these initiatives visit rdv.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/regional-workforce-pilots.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We understand that workforce and housing shortages are a real issue in our regional towns – that's why we are investing in these new pilots to help solve these issues and boost employment across the state."