

Media Release

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



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DIGITAL BOOSTS MAKE COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES STRONGER

The Golden Plains community will benefit from huge improvements to connectivity at a new hub that bridges the digital divide experienced by many regional Victorians.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas was in Smythesdale today to open a new co-working space and digital hub at the Well, which is part of the Victorian Government's initiative to help more regional businesses to pivot towards working online.

The project has been funded through the \$3.5 million *Regional Digital Fund*, which supports a broad range of digital projects identified as priorities by local Regional Partnerships. This project has been supported by the Central Highlands Regional Partnership.

This funding has delivered a modern, accessible digital hub and co-working space with fast internet and increased mobile phone coverage, offering locals and businesses a comfortable and efficient alternative to working from home.

The digital hub includes private office space, group meeting areas and sound-proof booths for online meetings and confidential phone calls.

The co-working space will be open from 9:00am-5:00pm Monday to Friday. The community will be able to use the space for free for the first 12 months as part of Golden Plains Shire's COVID-19 business support measures.

Priority projects backed by the *Regional Digital Fund* are rolling out across the state, including in the Barwon, Central Highlands, Gippsland, Great South Coast, Goulburn, Loddon Campaspe, Mallee, Ovens Murray and Wimmera Southern Mallee regions.

To find out more, visit rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We're fixing the connectivity gap in Smythesdale and other locations around Victoria because where you live shouldn't be a barrier to participation in the digital world."

Quote attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"Having access to reliable digital technologies helps communities stay connected and businesses adapt to new ways of doing things – the Smythesdale Digital Hub is a great step forward for Golden Plains and its residents."

Quote attributable to Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle

"The Smythesdale Well is a fantastic community hub. Creating a digital hub means community and small business will have access to high speed broadband."

Quote attributable to Central Highlands Regional Partnership Chair Tim Matthews

"We want to ensure locals have the opportunity to improve their digital literacy, whether that be for those working from home, local businesses or members of the community who want to brush up on their skills."

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