

Media Release

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



Thursday, 4 November 2021

PILOT FUND TO MAKE BIG DIFFERENCE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting small community-based organisations in the state's north-west to back projects in their region.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today launched the *Small Towns Big Difference* pilot program for the Buloke Shire, supported by a \$60,000 investment from the Labor Government through the Mallee Regional Partnership.

The \$120,000 fund is a collaboration between the Mallee Regional Partnership, the Buloke Shire Council, Charlton and Donald Community Banks and the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank.

The pilot was developed in recognition that many funding programs are geared towards economic development rather than the social benefits of small communities. Consequently, some community organisations find it difficult to attract funding for their smaller community-based projects that champion social outcomes.

Community organisations in the Buloke Shire will be encouraged to apply for *Small Towns Big Difference* grants for projects that build community capacity, social inclusion, community pride and improve lifestyle and access to community services, along with projects that develop the local economy.

Projects may include new play spaces for children and families, rest-stop reserve improvements, community halls, minor sport and recreation upgrades, shared workspaces for volunteers and streetscape art.

The *Small Towns Big Difference* fund is a priority of the Mallee Regional Partnership. The Mallee Regional Partnership is one of nine Partnerships across the state that was established by the Victorian Government in 2016, recognising that local communities understand the challenges and opportunities faced by their region.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We are proud to support small-community organisations to fulfil their potential through our Small Towns Big Difference pilot program, backing projects that boost community connection and pride."

Quote attributable to Bendigo and Adelaide Bank chief executive Marnie Baker

"The launch of the Small Towns Big Difference pilot program is a source of great pride for the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank which has been supporting community projects like these for many years through its philanthropic arm, the Community Enterprise Foundation."