

Friday, 22 April 2022

MORE HOUSING FOR WORKERS IN ARARAT

The Andrews Labor Government is laying the groundwork for more housing to support workers in Ararat, creating jobs and supporting the region as it continues to grow.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Ararat East Development Zone to view works underway and meet with workers who have moved to town as part of a resettlement program.

Both initiatives are backed by a \$1.88 million investment from the Labor Government's *Regional Workforce Pilots*.

Ararat is one of four sites across the state to benefit from the pilots, designed to test solutions to workforce shortages that threaten economic recovery and growth.

A lack of housing is a key driver of shortages, with Ararat rental vacancies falling from 1.5 per cent in March 2020 to 0.3 per cent in February this year.

In the past two years, the region's job vacancies have risen by 123 per cent. Works at the Ararat East Development Zone will create homes for up to 317 people.

The Government has provided \$950,000 towards the project which is set to support 134 jobs during the construction phase. Ararat Rural City Council has also contributed \$300,000 to the project.

Ararat is also home to a worker resettlement program which is backed by \$650,000 in funding – a partnership between Ararat Rural City Council and the Wyndham Community and Education Centre to support new migrants by connecting them with community services, housing, and local employers.

A coordinator role has also been developed and will provide local support for the resettlement program and the participants involved.

The pilots support other existing Government investments designed to create more jobs and attract more workers to the region, including the Opportunities Pyrenees, Ararat and Northern Grampians (OPAN) project.

This project has been supported by \$550,000 funding through the Central Highlands Regional Partnership, which involves mapping existing and future housing and skills shortages to support business needs.

In nearby Stawell, the *Regional Infrastructure Fund* supported the Sloane Street Housing Project with \$500,000 for the development of essential infrastructure to enable construction of more than 100 homes.

The 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 visit rdv.vic.gov.au/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 Ararat – which is why we are investing in a range of initiatives while supporting migrant workers to settle in town."