

Victorian Budget 2022/23



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development

Tuesday, 3 May 2022

MORE SUPPORT TO KEEP UP WITH OUR BOOMING REGIONS

The Andrews Labor Government is backing rural and regional Victorians with new investments in schools, hospitals and roads – to create more jobs and help communities continue to thrive.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* provides \$5.7 billion for regional initiatives, taking the Labor Government’s total investment in regional Victoria to more than \$36 billion since 2015.

From upgrading hospitals, to more schools and better roads – the Labor Government is getting the job done.

Victorian patients will have access to first-class health services and modern health treatments closer to home, with more than \$1 billion for regional health infrastructure, and funding to train and recruit thousands of nurses, doctors, ambos and allied health professionals who care for regional Victorians.

The *Regional Health Infrastructure Fund* will get a massive injection of \$300 million for vital projects at rural and regional health services, ranging from operating theatre refurbishments to equipment upgrades to accessible paths and ramps.

Since the Fund began in 2016, we’ve funded more than 480 projects – with this expansion, our investment will total \$790 million, ensuring communities continue to be able to access high-quality care in every corner of our state.

Three new public sector residential aged care facilities will be built in Camperdown, Mansfield and Orbost, with a \$146 million package – which includes planning funding to redevelop the Bright and Heywood aged care facilities.

We are providing more acute-level care in the regions, with \$195.8 million to deliver 15 more acute beds in Shepparton and acquire land and plan for a further 49 beds in Ballarat and Wangaratta.

A further \$10 million will deliver emergency department hubs for regional Victorians experiencing serious mental health and alcohol and drug issues, with one at Latrobe Regional Hospital and planning for three further hubs in Ballarat, Bendigo and Shepparton.

Regional Victoria hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games will supercharge local jobs and be a major drawcard for our regions, backed by \$2.6 billion of investment in this year’s Budget.

Four regional hubs will be established in Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland, creating jobs, housing and modern sports infrastructure to encourage Victorians to get active and attract future major events to every corner of the state. Shepparton will also host sporting and cultural events as part of the Commonwealth Games.

Other regional towns and cities are now able to register their interest in hosting activities as part of the Games.

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We've got the best of everything in regional Victoria and we're going to showcase it to the world. We're supporting regional businesses with an international tourism campaign to help the visitor economy boom.

This Budget also provides \$30 million for regional tourism projects, like improving the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and developing the Croajingolong Coastal Wilderness Walk in Gippsland.

We're making our schools even more inclusive for students with disability and special needs and upgrading 14 special schools across regional Victoria, as well as seven mainstream schools.

An investment of \$28.7 million will give regional and rural students choices when it comes to their education – including the establishment of a Regional Blended Learning Hub so they can study subjects they previously couldn't access at their school, through a mix of face-to-face and online learning.

This Budget invests in infrastructure, rolling stock, planning and maintenance of Victoria's regional rail network. There is \$250 million to deliver 12 new VLocity trains that will support more services on the Shepparton corridor and improve reliability for Warrnambool line passengers.

The new trains will be manufactured in Victoria, supporting local employment and supply chain jobs – and improving passenger experience on the regional network.

We're also providing a major boost to the freight and tourism industries while creating a smoother journey for all Victorians with \$101 million to upgrade regional roads. In addition, there is \$780 million over the coming year to maintain roads right across Victoria's regional and metropolitan road network.

Some \$193 million will be invested in regional development and agriculture, advancing the 10-year agriculture strategy and helping the sector remain strong, innovative and sustainable – while bolstering regional economies across the state.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$700 million in its flagship *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund* since 2015 – supporting around 13,000 jobs and delivering 1,000 projects.

This year, the Fund will receive another \$30 million to help businesses create more jobs in regional Victoria, support more community projects and help councils build the infrastructure locals need.

The Government is investing \$2.9 million to support agribusinesses across Victoria reach new markets and grow their sales globally – which ultimately means more jobs for Victorians.

This includes funding to continue the successful *Drink Victorian* campaign, and for Vic House in Shanghai, which gives Victorian agriculture producers and exporters dedicated in-market space to showcase their products.

Farmers and producers will also benefit from the new *Victorian Grown* initiative, which will get more locally produced food and drinks into Victorian businesses and on Victorian tables.

We're putting \$56.6 million behind the *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy* – our 50-year water security plan – to support jobs, communities, industry and agriculture across the region.

We're managing mine-affected groundwater around the Central Deborah Gold Mine in Bendigo with \$52 million, including construction of a new treatment facility.

Our regional unemployment rate is the lowest in the nation at 3.2 per cent. Since November 2014, regional unemployment has fallen by more than half and jobs have grown by more than 12 per cent in regional and rural Victoria – resulting in more than 80,000 more people employed compared to when we came to office.

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Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Regional Victoria is leading the way in our state’s economic recovery with the nation’s lowest regional unemployment rate – and there are exciting opportunities in every corner of the state.”

“For our state to keep prospering, our rural and regional communities need to thrive. That means good, secure jobs closer to home, high-quality schools for local kids and world-class healthcare for regional families – and we’ll get it done.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

“With investments in our hospitals, schools, businesses and farms, we’re a government that wants to make regional Victoria stronger than ever before.”

“We’re supporting regional Victoria with record investments to create local jobs and make regional communities across the state an even better place to live, work and invest.”