

Victorian Budget 2023/24



The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Agriculture

The Hon Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Regional Development

Tuesday, 23 May 2023

DOING WHAT MATTERS FOR REGIONAL VICTORIANS

The Andrews Labor Government is doing what matters for regional Victorians – delivering cost of living relief, upgrading schools and hospitals and creating thousands of jobs across the state.

More than 1.5 million people live in regional Victoria, with more migrating to our beautiful regional cities and communities every year.

And since 2014, we've created more than 175,000 jobs across the regions.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invests more than \$5 billion to continue the work we've started for rural and regional Victoria – with fairer V/Line fares, free kinder, upgrades to key hospitals and creating thousands of good local jobs by bringing back the SEC.

No matter where you live across the state, whether it's kinder, finding a good local school, or starting a career through TAFE or university – education changes lives.

Every three and four-year-old Victorian child can now access between five and 15 hours of free kinder a week, saving families up to \$2,500 per child each year.

We've already invested \$4.4 billion in our once-in-a-generation *Best Start, Best Life* and Three-Year-Old Kinder reforms. With this Budget, that investment is now at \$6.2 billion. That's a further \$1.8 billion to support the education of our littlest learners right across the state.

We're upgrading schools right across regional Victoria, including a \$67 million investment to upgrade 12 schools including in Geelong, Gisborne, Wonthaggi and Ararat.

There will be \$32 million to attract and retain more teachers across regional Victoria, including allowances for pre-service teachers to undertake placements at regional and remote schools.

This Budget also delivers a \$235 million package to transform the lives of students living with disability across the state, their carers and families – including \$11.3 million dedicated to getting more disability workers, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to regional Victoria.

Regional Victorians know that renewable energy means more jobs, and lower power bills.

Workers across regional Victoria remember the State Electricity Commission (SEC), and the good local jobs it created. As we work to bring back the SEC, we'll make sure regional Victoria plays an integral role in our clean energy future – it's energy created by Victorians, for Victorians, to make sure our state is never left paying the price for electricity privatisation again.

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An initial \$1 billion investment in the SEC will help deliver 4.5 gigawatts of power – the equivalent replacement capacity of Loy Yang A – through renewable energy projects.

Households across Victoria are facing real cost of living pressures. While we work to drive energy bills down in the long term, we're giving family budgets the relief they need right now, with \$400 million to roll out another round of the popular \$250 Power Saving Bonus to every Victorian household.

We're making it easier for families and commuters in regional Victoria to leave the car at home and get around by train and bus, while encouraging people from across the state to see the very best regional Victoria has to offer.

We promised we'd make regional public transport fares fair – and since we capped regional fares at the daily metropolitan price, Victorians have already saved about \$8 million.

And we'll keep improving V/Line – with a \$219 million investment for almost 200 extra regional weekend services across the state, and \$601 million for 23 new VLocity trains to be built right here in Victoria – supporting 500 local manufacturing jobs.

Recovery from natural disasters doesn't happen overnight and more than six months on from the devastating October floods, we're continuing to stand with affected Victorians.

The Budget invests \$677 million in ongoing flood recovery, building on the \$1.8 billion we promised last year to help communities get their lives back on track.

We know the October 2022 floods had a devastating impact on roads across regional Victoria. That's why, for the first time, we're investing an extra \$2.8 billion in road maintenance over 10 years to provide long-term certainty, as we substantially repair not just flood-damaged roads, but roads across our state – keeping communities connected and drivers safer.

This extra funding means at least \$6.6 billion will be invested in road asset management on Victoria's road network over the next decade.

More than \$23 million is allocated to rebuild the Rochester and Heathcote VicSES Emergency Hubs. We promised the Rochester community we'd rebuild their police station that was badly damaged by floodwater and we'll provide \$1.3 million for a permanent home for officers and to undertake flood mitigation works on the site.

Every Victorian should be able to get the healthcare they need, when they need it, close to home.

That's why this Budget gives a boost to healthcare across our regions including a \$20 million package to support 25 Priority Primary Care Centres, with eight in regional Victoria.

To get the very best healthcare, you need world-class hospitals. We will start the important planning and design work for the second stage of the Wonthaggi Hospital upgrade and for the brand new hospital in West Gippsland.

We are investing \$44 million to deliver eight new PET scanners including four at hospitals in Ballarat, Shepparton, Warrnambool and Wangaratta – improving our capacity to assess cancers, neurological and cardiovascular diseases for all Victorians.

We're taking care of those we love as they age, with \$162 million for better aged care services across regional Victoria, building new public aged care services in Cohuna, Maffra and Numurkah.

Victoria is Australia's agricultural powerhouse – and Victorians rely on our farmers to provide the food we eat from paddock to plate.

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Investing in biosecurity means protecting Victoria's agriculture sector from the serious threats posed by emergency animal diseases, including foot-and-mouth disease. We'll invest \$17.5 million in skills training and equipment to prepare for a rapid response to any emergency animal disease detection.

Victoria's renowned producers will benefit from \$31 million, including \$3 million for farm safety programs, \$10 million for the Distillery Door program, \$5 million for the Wine to the World program and \$5 million in hospitality scholarships – ensuring the right skilled workers to fill our booming hospitality sector.

And to encourage more visitors to flock to Victoria from across the country and around the world, we'll invest \$32.5 million in Visit Victoria to continue its work strengthening our visitor economy.

With ALWAYS LIVE, we brought the Foo Fighters to Geelong and Nick Cave to Hanging Rock – drawing thousands of fans from around Australia and the globe. A \$20 million investment will keep the music playing, alongside a \$2.5 million boost to Victoria's renowned music festival scene.

Proud tiny towns across the state are part of what makes Victoria great. We're launching a \$10 million Tiny Towns Fund for regional and outer suburban communities of up to 5,000 people, backing projects that drive tourism and community pride like new hiking trails.

In smaller towns across the state, we're investing to upgrade the St Leonards Progress Association Hall and Warrnambool Community Garden, and support clubs like the Beechworth Lions Club.

We're also getting on with our \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build, Victoria's largest-ever investment in social and affordable housing, to deliver over 12,000 new homes for Victorians, including a target of \$1.25 billion to be spent across regional areas.

Over the past nine years, we have invested an average of \$4.6 billion in each and every Budget in regional Victoria – and this year goes above and beyond to deliver for Victorians in every corner of our state.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We're doing what matters – supporting families, jobs and fairness in rural and regional Victoria."

"Whether it's bringing back the SEC, making V/Line fares fairer or upgrading key regional hospitals – we are delivering for all Victorians."

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Harriet Shing

"It's so important to recognise and support our smallest towns across rural and regional Victoria, including through transition and change – we're delighted to invest in these communities, their liveability, histories, and pride of place."

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney

"We're backing our world-class agriculture industry and the Victorians who rely on it, helping farmers access new markets at home and overseas and future-proofing the sector against pests and diseases."