

# Victorian Budget 2023/24



**The Hon Daniel Andrews MP**  
Premier

Tuesday, 23 May 2023

## DOING WHAT MATTERS FOR VICTORIANS

Since we came to government, we haven't wasted a day delivering the services and projects that matter to Victorians.

And last year, we put forward a positive plan to keep building the hospitals, schools, roads and rail that our state needs now, and for the future.

With the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, we're starting work on every single one of our election commitments – all while paying down our COVID debt.

Health systems around the world were hit hard by the pandemic, and ours was no different. But our nurses, doctors, paramedics and allied healthcare workers set the most powerful examples of compassion and selflessness as they cared for Victorians.

At the same time, the Andrews Labor Government acted decisively: putting in place vital public health measures that kept Victorians safe – and set a stable foundation for recovery.

Today, we're building on that work by handing down a Budget in two parts: delivering on our promises to Victorians, and a *COVID Debt Repayment Plan*.

This Budget builds on the Labor Government's record of delivering for all Victorians – because we'll keep doing what matters.

We've made TAFE free, helped create hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs, invested in renewables and helped families install solar panels and batteries to keep power bills down.

We're investing in hospitals, training thousands of nurses and paramedics, and we've made studying nursing free – because the backbone of any world-class health system is its workforce.

Kinder is now free too, saving families thousands and giving our kids the best start – while every Victorian student is supported to get the skills they need for a great career with the VCE Vocational Major.

Victorians remember the State Electricity Commission (SEC). It meant fair power prices, and good stable jobs – and that's why we're bringing it back.

We're getting started on building 4.5 gigawatts of new government-owned renewables – the equivalent of replacing Loy Yang A.

The new SEC will help create more than 59,000 jobs – and we'll open a new Wind Worker Training Centre, the SEC Centre of Training Excellence and six new tech schools to help train the next generation of energy workers.

Across the state, we're delivering the world-class hospitals so every Victorian can get the care they need, close to home.

**Media contact:** Lily King 0499 791 387 | [lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

We're getting started on Australia's biggest hospital project ever – the redevelopment of the Royal Women's and Royal Melbourne Hospitals – as well as the new hospital for West Gippsland, the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Ringwood East and major upgrades at the Northern Hospital, Austin Hospital, Dandenong Hospital, Wonthaggi Hospital and Monash Medical Centre.

New hospitals are nothing without the team of doctors and nurses who care for their patients around the clock.

Right now, it's almost impossible to get in to see a GP – particularly one who bulk bills. So we've stepped up, and we're working closely with the Commonwealth Government to run 25 free Priority Primary Care Clinics, including seven in regional Victoria.

We're also delivering a package of incentives to retain and recruit healthcare workers, including 10,000 new nurses.

Women make up more than half of our population, yet too often their healthcare is not taken seriously – they are misdiagnosed or ignored.

We're giving women's health the focus it deserves, with 20 women's health clinics and an Aboriginal-led clinic, and by doubling the number of surgeries for endometriosis and associated conditions – so women don't wait years for a diagnosis.

Building our mental health system from the ground up is a huge job – but this Budget builds on our work over the past two years to get on with it.

We've opened six Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Services, and we're getting to work on delivering 44 more – because the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System told us Victorians need a front door to get the help they need.

This Budget looks after the most vulnerable Victorians – with the biggest investment in a decade towards giving children in residential care the support they need with a safe and secure place to call home.

As the first jurisdiction to begin work on all three elements called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we've led the way in giving Aboriginal people the voice they deserve. This Budget will continue to support Treaty negotiations, and back the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria as the voice of First Peoples in Victoria.

From kinder right through to TAFE – education changes lives. That's why we've rolled out Free Kinder across the state, and we're starting work on opening 50 new government-owned and operated childcare centres – so the littlest Victorians can get the best start, for the best life.

We're also building more schools – 100 by 2026, with 75 open by the start of 2024. This Budget will deliver another nine across the state – as well as continuing to transform our specialist schools.

We'll fix the biggest challenges for families of students at specialist schools – expanding out-of-hours care to 30 specialist schools, delivering more extra-curricular activities and put more speech pathologists and occupational therapists into specialist schools.

When we came to government, we saved TAFE and got to work making it stronger than ever. Today, there are more than 70 courses on the Free TAFE list.

And now we're extending it to all Victorians – so, whether you have a higher qualification or not, you can get the skills you need for the job you want.

**Media contact:** Lily King 0499 791 387 | [lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:lily.king@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

We've already removed 70 level crossings, and we'll get rid of 110 by 2030 – while tracks have been laid in the Metro Tunnel and it's on schedule to open one year early.

We'll upgrade the Melton Line, build 23 more VLocity trains for V/Line passengers, and we'll keep upgrading roads across the state, particularly those affected by last year's floods.

We promised to make V/Line fares fair – capping them at the same price as a daily metropolitan fare. And, just a month in, Victorians have already saved more than \$8 million on regional train fares.

We'll keep standing with flood-affected communities as they get on with the task of rebuilding their communities.

We know that work is so important – because our regions are booming. And as they grow, we're making sure the services regional Victorians rely on keep pace.

With this Budget, we'll invest more than \$5 billion across rural and regional Victoria.

It'll mean upgraded schools, expanded emergency departments, cheaper public transport, more skills training, more jobs and more support for our farmers.

Right now, countries across the world are grappling with high inflation and interest rate hikes – and Australia is no different. But Victoria will weather these challenges from a strong position.

The Victorian economy is strong, and it's growing. Unemployment is around the lowest it's been for nearly 50 years – and in regional Victoria, it's near a record low.

It's no mistake. The Labor Government's investments have delivered the jobs we needed in the short term, and they're supporting our growing state into the future too.

COVID-19 was a one-in-one-hundred-year event that tested all of us. The Government borrowed to save lives, and to save jobs. That was essential. Now, it's essential, that we pay that money back.

That's why with this Budget, the Government has laid down a full and comprehensive *COVID Debt Repayment Plan*.

We're starting work on every single one of our election commitments, while we pay down our COVID Debt.

These are the things that matter – and we're getting on with it.

**Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews**

*"This is a Budget that does what matters most to Victorians – from better healthcare and education to real relief on the cost of living."*

*"We're doing everything we promised Victorians we'd do – and we're not wasting a moment getting on with it."*