

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Friday, 26 May 2023

DOING WHAT MATTERS FOR FAMILIES, PARENTS AND KIDS

The Andrews Labor Government is doing what matters for families, parents and kids across regional Victoria, with a comprehensive package to give parents the support they need at the start of their life as a new family.

Ballarat will soon be home to a new Early Parenting Centre – the first in the region. With construction well underway and due for completion by the end of the year, the centre will give parents and carers the advice, care and support, close to home.

Sleep and settling is one of the biggest challenges facing new parents, with around one in two Victorian parents who are attending the early parenting centres reporting problems with their child's sleep.

But we know there is more to do and that's why this Budget will invest \$86 million to give mums, dads and babies more support.

We'll increase access to free Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services giving our hardworking MCH nurses more time with families, delivering more support for parents during this crucial period.

While there are many reasons women may not continue breastfeeding, a lack of support shouldn't be one of them. That's why we'll deliver free appointments with midwives and nurses who are trained to provide lactation consultations, to help women through the challenges of latching and establishing milk supply.

Additionally, we will support the creation of more fathers' groups across the state to give more opportunities for dads to feel supported and connected in a peer-to-peer setting.

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, planning for upgrades to key hospitals and supporting thousands of good local jobs by bringing back the SEC.

Every Victorian should be able to get the healthcare they need, when they need it, close to home – and this year's Budget gives a boost to healthcare across our regions, including a \$58 million package for 20 new women's health clinics at public hospitals, including eight in regional Victoria – with one at Ballarat Base Hospital.

We are investing \$44 million to deliver eight new PET scanners at hospitals across the state including four in regional Victoria – with one in Ballarat, improving our capacity to access cancers, neurological and cardiovascular diseases for all Victorians.

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 – with a further \$1.8 billion to support the education of our littlest learners right across the state.

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We're upgrading schools right across regional Victoria, including \$8.6 million for Woodmans Hill Secondary College in Ballarat East to create a dedicated space for Year 7s, an extension to the VCE centre to support senior students and a refurbishment of the integrated learning building.

The Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre at Federation TAFE will receive \$6 million for Stage 2 of works, with a classroom, workshop and equipment to deliver specialised training courses, such as wind turbine maintenance and blade repair.

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.

We'll invest \$50 million in the historic Ballarat Station to improve accessibility, safety and amenity, while protecting the station's rich heritage.

This month we announced a digital driver licence pilot for Ballarat that will lead to a statewide rollout by 2024 – giving every Victorian driver the option of carrying their licence on their phone.

Every family deserves the chance to get out and kick a ball, go for a run, walk the dog or enjoy our great local parks. And as regional Victorians spend more time outdoors with the people they love, this Budget invests in creating and improving local community spaces.

We are funding new and upgraded community sport and recreation projects across regional Victoria, including up to \$8.4 million for Marty Busch Reserve, \$1 million towards the redevelopment of Brown Hill Recreation Reserve and \$450,000 for court and light upgrades at Royal Park Football Netball Club in Maryborough.

The iconic Stawell Gift race will continue to run in western Victoria with \$1.7 million to make sure the event is sustainable for many years to come.

We are investing \$500,000 towards the delivery of the first Australian memorial based in Ballarat to acknowledge all victim survivors of sexual violence.

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.

This Budget invests \$677 million in ongoing flood recovery, building on the \$1.8 billion committed 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.

Since we came to government, 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.

These are the things that matter – and the things we promised to Victorians.

And with this Budget, we're getting on with delivering every election commitment we made at the last election.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Every family is different, but what is universal is how a new baby will completely change your life. We’ll help parents feel supported and connected in those early weeks and months.”

“We’re doing what matters – supporting families, jobs and fairness in rural and regional Victoria.”

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

“Having access to a PET scanner close to home makes a massive difference to patients and their families. It means answers, and critically, earlier access to life-saving care.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eureka Michaela Settle

“Pregnancy, childbirth and parenting affect us in all kinds of ways. This centre will provide vital support for parents in and around Ballarat as they grow their families – a place of care during the early stages of their babies’ lives.”

Quote attributable to Member for Ripon Martha Haylett

“We are making it easier, and cheaper, to give our kids the very best start in life, while supporting parents and families with the services and support they need.”