

Helping Families

Victorian Budget 2024/25



The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC
Minister for Regional Development

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A BUDGET THAT'S HELPING FAMILIES IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

Across our state and nation, the cost of groceries, transport and household bills have skyrocketed – affecting families across Victoria.

That's why the *Victorian Budget 2024/25* is firmly focused on helping regional families, investing more than \$2 billion to support the infrastructure, services and projects that matter to regional Victorians.

This Budget delivers a once-off \$400 School Saving Bonus to help cover the cost of uniforms, excursions, sports and the extras that make school fun. Available to every government school student, and those doing it tough at non-government schools – it gives regional families one less thing to worry about.

We're also tripling the Glasses for Kids program – reaching an extra 74,000 young Victorians across the state – providing free vision screening and prescription glasses for kids who need them. And we're delivering even more Get Active Kids vouchers, providing up to \$200 to help families cover the costs of kids' sport.

On top of immediate cost-of-living support, we're continuing to build schools across regional Victoria, with four brand-new primary schools in some of our fastest-growing areas: Greater Geelong, Wodonga and Mitchell Shire.

We know a great education starts with great facilities – which is why we've delivered \$40 million to upgrade and modernise seven schools, including schools in Traralgon, Beechworth, Swan Hill and Cobden.

We're helping kids find their passions with \$14 million for our Tech Schools – including reaching more regional students with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) camps and delivery of Tech School programs through remote and flexible learning.

We're making sure distance isn't a barrier to students studying the things they want – with \$6 million to expand curriculum access for rural and regional students, and \$11.1 million for locally-driven projects across regional Victoria, supporting students to engage in education with local knowledge and expertise.

This includes supporting One Red Tree to train psychologists to work in schools in Ararat, the Farm My School program on the Bellarine Peninsula that will teach kids about growing healthy food, and on the Great South Coast of Victoria we're backing Beyond the Bell to support kids with challenges outside of the classroom.

In this Budget, we're continuing to invest in healthcare in our schools – ensuring students have access to doctors, nurses, speech pathologists and social workers at school – and backing community-based education projects with \$8.4 million.

We are also continuing to invest in healthcare – supporting the staff, services and life-saving equipment that regional communities rely on.

We are making the single biggest multi-year investment in Victoria's healthcare system in our history, giving hospitals funding certainty as they continue to recover from the impacts and increased costs of the pandemic.

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We're funding \$117 million to operate expanded facilities at health services – including \$44 million for expanded facilities at the Latrobe Regional Hospital, which will have capacity for 44 inpatient beds, 14 medical and surgical beds, a new emergency department resuscitation bay and a medical imaging pathology unit.

We're also supporting bed-based services in Traralgon, with 10 new beds to provide more support for young people experiencing mental health challenges – and we're investing \$6.9 million to deliver early intervention for Victorians with an eating disorder, including establishing an Eating Disorders Day Program in regional Victoria.

In Victoria, equality is not negotiable no matter where you live – that's why we're continuing our nation-leading support for our LGBTIQ+ communities, with a gender-affirming clinic in Ballarat to make sure trans and gender diverse Victorians have the healthcare they deserve.

We know that being a new parent can be both rewarding and challenging, and for those mums who need some extra support, we are investing \$5.7 million into our Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies initiative – available at nine locations across regional Victoria – ensuring they have the best support possible during and after their pregnancy.

On top of the historic redevelopment of the Ballarat Base Hospital, we're investing \$5.4 million to establish a mental health, alcohol and other drugs emergency department hub.

We're also making sure Victorians at the end of their life get the care and comfort they deserve with \$1.6 million to increase the number of people with cancer receiving early palliative care in our regional communities.

We've recently announced a major Statewide Action Plan delivering a health-led approach to reducing drug harms across the state – and this will include grants available to community-led health services in our regions.

As we deliver the things that matter most to families, we also need to be disciplined and sensible in responding to the challenges ahead. One of those challenges is inflation. Another is workforce constraints.

Victoria's economy is expected to outpace all other states over the next five years. And over the past nine years, more than 170,000 jobs have been created in regional Victoria – with unemployment falling to historically low levels.

It's a good problem to have – knowing that each month, thousands more Victorians find secure, fulfilling work.

But it also means that, in some priority sectors, we need more workers. It's why we need to make sensible and modest adjustments to the pace of some of our biggest projects and reforms to give Victoria's workforce time to build up and skill up, and allow global supply chains to catch up.

It's why with this Budget, we'll keep building the pipeline of future workers we need – continuing our nation-leading investments in training, including Free TAFE which has already helped skill more than 170,000 Victorians.

We're also continuing our work to make sure more Victorians have the stability of a home.

This Budget invests nearly \$197 million in frontline homelessness and housing services, with more than \$115 million in grant funding available for homelessness services – while a further \$19 million will improve response times for repairs and maintenance in public housing.

Our \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build is already providing more Victorians with a place to call home – with 25 per cent of that fund dedicated to delivering quality homes in regional Victoria.

This is on top of our investment to build more homes in regional Victoria with \$1 billion from the Regional Housing Fund to deliver more than 1,300 new social and affordable homes across regional Victoria – designed with councils, regional partnerships, and local communities.

With the cost of living continuing to rise, we're also delivering an extra \$5 million to support organisations and neighbourhood houses to provide food relief, as well as continuing the work of our six regional food relief hubs.

From more frequent train and bus services, to upgrading and fixing country roads – the Labor Government is helping families get home safely. This Budget continues to keep us connected, investing \$25.3 million to continue running extra services, including weekday return services for the Warrnambool and Echuca train lines.

The Budget also invests \$133.4 million to further support our regional rail network – including operating newly delivered train stabling yards, stations and VLocity trains, and upgrading the 150-year-old historic rail tunnel between Geelong and South Geelong. A further \$104 million will keep rail freight moving across Victoria.

This Budget also includes \$62 million for upgrades to make regional roads safer, including upgrades to sections of the Princes, Western and Calder Highways.

We're reducing the need for trucks to travel through towns, creating better freight routes through Sale in Gippsland, and making safer crossings for pedestrians at Miners Rest and Wedderburn.

Sadly, what were previously considered once-in-a-generation flood events are now commonplace. Not only bringing record rainfall, it's also inflicting unprecedented damage to our roads.

We are helping regional and rural communities get back on their feet and repairing flood-impacted roads. The Budget includes \$964 million to maintain our state's road network this coming year alone – including extra funding to clean up the damage from flooding.

We're investing an extra \$100 million to repair our roads, including pavements, infrastructure and fixing landslips, as well as immediate recovery works to roads within the Buchan Caves Reserve site.

We're also supporting the clean-up, repair and rebuild of communities like Pomonal and Beaufort with \$302 million to help community recovery from the bushfires and storms. This includes repairs to schools, roads and other infrastructure, as well as temporary accommodation, relief payments and mental health support for residents.

Every day, our emergency services are on the frontline, protecting their communities from fires, floods and other incidents – we're making sure they have the equipment they need to do the job, with new world-class replacement pumps for the CFA.

We're also creating more opportunities for Victorian families to enjoy the great outdoors. Victoria has an extra 1.8 million hectares of forest for people to explore – this Budget invests \$115.7 million to manage this land, keep forests healthy and find more opportunities for people to get out across our beautiful state.

Women and children deserve to be safe – in their homes, in their workplaces and on our streets. Already this year, too many regional communities have felt the heartbreak and trauma of violence against women.

While we delivered every recommendation of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence alongside a nation-leading investment of almost \$4 billion, our work to build on these strong foundations will continue – with support to keep women and children safe and hold perpetrators to account in regional Victoria.

This Budget invests more than \$211 million to help keep women and children safe and support victim-survivors – including making sure our Respectful Relationships program continues to prevent family violence before it starts.

But we won't stop there. We'll have more to say in the coming weeks about further measures to prevent the scourge of family violence, address toxic masculinity and help make sure women are safe.

This Budget builds on our \$2 billion Regional Package, creating thousands of jobs and delivering more homes, more tourism, more events, a strong pipeline of infrastructure projects, and great local sporting facilities.

From cost-of-living help, to investing in regional schools and healthcare, road and rail – this Budget is all about helping families.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“This is my first Budget as Premier, and I’m proud to say – it’s a Budget that’s all about helping regional families.”

“Many regional families are doing it tough right now. With this Budget we’re helping ease that pressure and give families one less thing to worry about.”

“We’ll always deliver for regional Victoria. This Budget continues our record of investing in regional Victoria and delivering more schools and better healthcare for families, closer to home.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Gayle Tierney

“Whether it’s giving our kids opportunities to learn cutting edge skills in STEM or improving our freight networks – this Budget brings the world to regional Victoria and takes regional Victoria to the world.”