

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the
Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources

Friday, 13 September 2019



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

TACKLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

The Andrews Labor Government is backing a new plan to improve digital connectivity in central Victoria as part of a commitment to give regional Victorians equal access to the infrastructure and services available in Melbourne.

Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes and Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade Martin Pakula today launched the Central Highlands Digital Plan – the first of its kind in Victoria, supported by a share in \$1 million through the *Connecting Regional Communities Program*.

The Central Highlands plan is one of nine digital plans currently under development in collaboration with the Labor Government’s Regional Partnerships.

Communities across Victoria called on Regional Partnerships to prioritise digital connectivity in regional Victoria, and the Labor Government listened.

Developed by the Central Highlands Regional Partnership, the new digital plan provides a comprehensive overview of digital infrastructure and supply shortages across Ballarat, Moorabool, Golden Plains, Ararat, Pyrenees and Hepburn shires.

The plan incorporates investigative fieldwork and mapping of current services such as mobile coverage, fixed broadband for businesses, public WiFi and Internet of Things networks.

Since 2014, the Labor Government has already invested \$130 million to improve digital connectivity across rural and regional Victoria.

14 new mobile towers have been built within the Central Highlands region to address blackspots and improve public safety, liveability and economic opportunities.

The Government’s investment has also improved mobile connectivity on VLine rail services between Melbourne and Ballarat and delivered a free public WiFi network in Ballarat.

The Central Highlands Digital Plan can be viewed at <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/news/new-plan-to-tackle-digital-divide-in-central-victoria>.

The remaining eight plans will be released over the coming months.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

“Nobody knows the priorities of country Victoria better than the communities themselves, and we’re proud to have invested in this plan through the Central Highlands Regional Partnership to tackle the digital divide across the state.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade Martin Pakula

“Regional communities and businesses deserve high-quality, reliable digital infrastructure and services, and this first-of-its-kind digital plan will pave the way for better connectivity.”

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