VICTORIA’S REGIONAL STATEMENT
YOUR VOICE, YOUR REGION, YOUR STATE.
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I was raised in regional Victoria.

Let me make one thing clear: no government should ever take the people of regional Victoria for granted. Families here deserve a government that works as hard as they do, and that’s what this Regional Statement is all about.

It starts with more jobs, in industries new and old. We’ve hit the ground running since coming to office, creating more jobs, reducing unemployment, saving Victoria’s TAFE system and establishing the $500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. This is just the start.

Education is the key to the future of regional Victoria. Instead of cutting funds to our TAFE system, we’re saving it. We’re building the Education State in regional Victoria, delivering the single biggest injection of funds to the education system in our state’s history.

More jobs and a better education system mean more opportunities for the next generation. Families shouldn’t have to be forced to watch their kids move away from home just to get a job or start a career. Every young person deserves the same chance, no matter where they live.

We need to invest more in transport and infrastructure to make food and fibre more competitive in the overseas markets and regional tourism more accessible to our growing number of tourists. These are two rapidly-growing export sectors and its where regional Victoria’s future lies.

It’s also about making regional Victorian cities and communities better places to live. The basics first: Supporting local paramedics, police and emergency services. Helping families overcome the plague of ice. Working with community groups to embrace the diversity that makes our state great.

But after all, this is your voice, your region and your state. Governments shouldn’t try to tell you precisely what you need. They should listen to what you want, because you know best. That’s exactly what we’ve done, consulting with families and businesses and councils across Victoria.

At its heart, this Regional Statement is about more jobs, more security and a better start for young people right across our state. I truly believe that Victoria can’t be the best place in the world unless its regional communities are the most successful in the nation. So we’re getting on with it.

The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Premier
In February this year, the Government commissioned an independent review into Regional Economic Development and Services (“the Regional Review”), led by former Victorian Premier, John Brumby.

We wanted to give regional communities a say about what matters. We wanted to hear about their hopes for the future and the role government can play.

I was delighted by the interest, energy and enthusiasm brought to this process.

Throughout the course of the Regional Review, almost 700 regional stakeholders provided their views. A taskforce was established across the nine government departments to develop a co-ordinated approach to regional policy and governance and respond to the Regional Review. And, I chaired a Ministerial Working Group to consider the government’s response. The culmination of this work is the Regional Statement.

I would particularly like to make mention of the dedication and hard work volunteered by each member of the External Advisory Board that oversaw the Regional Review. It was outstanding.

They travelled all over the state to participate in meetings, sought and considered input from hundreds of individuals, communities and businesses.

The Regional Review has played a key role in the development of Victoria’s Regional Statement.

However, this statement goes well beyond the Review’s focus on economic development and acknowledges the changes impacting on regional communities and the urgent need to tackle pockets of entrenched disadvantage and disparity in some parts of Victoria.

It sets a new approach that will change the way government works with regional Victorians. We don’t have all the answers. No government can ever promise that. But we can pledge to ask the right questions and consult with as many families, workers and business owners as possible.

We can promise to work hard and come up with a fair plan for our future – one that gives regional Victorians a real voice and a true sense of ownership over their future. And that’s what we’ve done.

It’s a clear way forward that’s about working directly with local communities to build on regional Victoria’s strengths and tackle the issues that matter most.

I’m proud to call myself a country Victorian. It’s such an exciting time to live and work here, and I look forward to working with you to take up these opportunities and to secure not only a bright future for our regional communities and businesses, but also to deliver the substantial benefits generated for all Victorians by a strong and prosperous regional Victoria.

The Hon. Jaala Pulford MP
Minister for Regional Development
PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA
The Andrews Labor Government understands the enormous contribution regional Victoria makes to Victoria’s economic strength and way of life.

We understand that every region is different. From dryland to irrigated farming; and from big cities to small towns. From economies reliant on food and fibre, to tourism, manufacturing and natural resources. Some regions are experiencing significant population growth, while others are facing population adjustment and decline. Regional communities have their own character, their own aspirations, and their own common sense understanding of the challenges and opportunities that they face.

We want to put government back to work for regional Victoria.

Regional Victoria deserves a government that is responsive to its diverse strengths, opportunities and aspirations. A government that acts on local opportunities and challenges.

That’s why we took to the election last year a clear commitment to grow jobs in regional Victoria, rebuild schools and reinvigorate communities.

It’s also why the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund was the first major fund we established on coming to government.

It’s why we asked regional leaders – including a former Premier – to build on previous Labor Government strategies for regional Victoria and undertake an independent Review into regional economic development at the very beginning of this term.

The Review was a very important step in developing this Statement for regional Victoria.

The Statement is about creating jobs, providing a better start for young people, and supporting a brighter future for families and communities.

The Regional Statement’s centrepiece is the establishment of nine new Regional Partnerships across the State that will direct regional priorities straight into the heart of government. This will make sure that more than ever, government is working for regional communities. Not those with the loudest voices – but the families, workers and communities that are the heart and soul of regional Victoria.

The Partnerships will look at the strategic priorities regional communities have identified themselves – across economic, social and environmental issues – and oversee implementation of the top priorities on a year-by-year basis. These will be published and Partnerships will be publicly accountable for getting things done.

To support this new approach we will significantly strengthen the seniority of regional executive leadership in Regional Development Victoria (RDV).

The Partnerships will recognise that the opportunities and challenges facing regional communities are complex and intertwined, and that a narrow, sectional view of the world will not take us where we need to go.

Partnerships will recognise that government needs to change how it operates to respond to the needs of communities, and not the other way around.

Communities have said they want a greater say and to see a clearer link with government actions. Through this Statement we will deliver a louder voice for regional communities in government decision-making.

The Andrews Labor Government looks forward to working with you on the next exciting chapter, building stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous rural and regional communities.

PUTTING GOVERNMENT BACK TO WORK FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA
Regional development since 1999

The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999 was the first legislation passed by the Bracks Labor Government. The Act was the foundation on which Labor has continued to build on through the years. Investing in regional people, in regional infrastructure, and regional economies.

Since its election in 2014, the Andrews Labor Government has continued to make regional Victoria our priority. Our first budget was focused on the skills, jobs and infrastructure investments that matter to regional Victorian families.

This Statement sets out the next steps and flags future directions for regional development policy to get government back to work for regional Victoria.

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REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
Adapting to change through community participation and leadership is not new to rural and regional Victoria. Many successful projects have been driven by local action.

A common ingredient to success is a lot of hard work and commitment. But the people involved have said that, too often, their hard work doesn’t pay off because government isn’t really listening. We want to change that.

We genuinely want to hear from community about the aspirations and goals they have for their regions.

We want people to feel enthusiastic but also empowered to improve their region. And we want people to feel confident that the actions they drive are delivering the results they desire.

To make this happen, we are changing the way the Victorian Government works with the regions.

The case for change

Through consultation conducted during the Regional Review, many regional Victorians said they didn’t see a clear pathway into government decision-making for the priorities and problems they identified in their Regional Strategic Plans.

The Review also noted that there were some limitations in the ability of the current governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for regional communities. This needs to change.

That’s why we have developed a new approach that will enhance regional leadership and give regional communities more say and build stronger connections with government by:

- Connecting regional priorities and regional investment opportunities directly with the Victorian Government’s decision-making processes.
- Ensuring all ministerial portfolios across government – from education to transport, health, justice and planning – are addressing rural and regional problems, with a strong focus on creating jobs and tackling disadvantage.
- Creating opportunities for local communities and individuals to have a greater say about the issues of importance to them.

This is the model that regional Victoria asked for through the extensive consultation conducted earlier this year as part of the Regional Review.

Regional Partnerships: bringing regional priorities to the heart of government

The Regional Partnerships will bring together representatives from local business, education, social services and community groups with the three tiers of government.

The new Partnerships will build on the work already done by existing regional leadership groups, including Regional Strategic Plans.

The work of the Regional Partnerships will encompass all these areas. Everyone will have an opportunity to contribute.
Each Regional Partnership will communicate directly with a Rural and Regional Ministerial Committee. This means that priorities identified by regional areas will have a direct and clear pathway into the resourcing decisions made by departments and Ministers. The Government will work with communities to design new policies and services. We will also share more information so more groups can contribute to problem-solving.

From 1 July 2016, Regional Partnerships will be formed in nine regions in rural and regional Victoria. Boundaries for the nine regions better reflect the real communities-of-interest that exist throughout regional Victoria and will ensure that decisions and plans made take into account the aspirations and goals of each community. The membership of Regional Partnerships will reflect this new vision.

These changes form part of a broader shift in thinking across government. The public sector is no longer the sole, or even the major provider of many services and programs that deliver ‘public value’.

There is knowledge, expertise, resources and experience held across the public, private and community sectors.

People from across these sectors have many shared goals, and we can maximise our effectiveness if we all work together. Regional Partnerships will apply this thinking. It’s a fundamental shift.
NINE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WILL BE FORMED ACROSS THE STATE
Everyone has a role to play

The Regional Partnerships will ask communities about their biggest issues and what matters most. Every Victorian should have the opportunity to have their voice heard by government, and to participate in decisions that impact their lives. We want to have a proper conversation with communities – not just talking, but listening.

They will use existing networks and build new opportunities for communities and individuals to have a greater say.

Annual Summits in each region will bring a range of local leaders together – including elected officials – to identify priority areas for action.

Our goal is to ensure that each region has a strong voice in government and that the concerns and aspirations of regional Victorians are heard and considered in all major government decisions.

All Ministers and government departments will have an interest, and will be visible and actively involved.

The membership of Regional Partnerships will reflect this new vision.

The Government also recognises the strategic leadership role that rural and regional councils play in contributing to the prosperity and wellbeing of Victoria.

For local government, the Partnerships will be a new vehicle to get things done and to make sure the diverse needs and experiences of rural and regional councils are heard in Melbourne. We will work cooperatively with local government to address the differences that can arise in service provision by utilising the Regional Partnerships to capitalise on local strengths and knowledge through the development of shared services and directly informing the government on region wide priorities.
Turning ideas into action

Interest from locals, a wide range of stakeholders, an active and open process, a channel to the heart of government – all this only matters if the results are realised. That’s why the Regional Partnerships will be open and accountable for their work.

The Partnerships will build on existing Regional Strategic Plans and, each year, will agree actions and outcomes to progress economic and social priorities. These will be available publicly and the Partnerships will report on how they are going. Transparency will be a key factor for success.

What does this mean for existing regional leadership groups?

Partnerships will build on and complement existing regional leadership groups and will form relationships with relevant groups in each region in whatever way works best.

Regional Partnerships will replace Regional Management Forums as the Victorian Government’s primary means of organising in regional Victoria. We thank members of these forums for their participation and enthusiasm over many years.

The Regional Development Australia Committees which operate as critical leadership groups and provide a pathway for regional Victoria into the Commonwealth Government will work closely with Regional Partnerships in each region through co-ordinated support from RDV.

Other regional leadership, governance or service delivery groups, such as Children and Youth Area Partnerships, will continue unchanged.

We recognise that a ‘one size fits all’ approach often doesn’t work. We will continue to work with regional leaders before any changes are bedded down to ensure the plans and boundaries in each region are the best fit for each local community.

Expressions of Interest to be part of the Partnerships will open in early 2016. Information sessions will be held in the New Year, but for further information, contact your local RDV office.

WHAT’S NEXT

Through the new Regional Partnerships, regional Victorians will have:

• A simple and effective way to influence the priorities of their communities – getting the filters and delays of bureaucracy out of the way.

• A direct channel to identify new opportunities and get them in front of State Government decision makers – giving life to the region’s creative and entrepreneurial thinkers.

• A better way to collaboratively solve problems – no more us and them, these are our problems to solve.

• A greater influence on the decisions that affect their lives.

In part this will be achieved by bringing communities closer to Victorian Government decision makers, including the Premier and Ministers, through the new governance arrangements and transparent consultation.
The new Regional Partnerships will be tasked with undertaking meaningful engagement with their communities – not just elected officials, community leaders or the loudest voices.

The onus will then be on the Government to respond quickly and report back to communities on the progress of medium and longer term matters.

Supporting this new approach will be a program of face to face and online activity to ensure each of the new regions has the opportunity to engage directly with the Premier and other members of the Cabinet on issues the community identifies as important.
GETTING ON WITH IT IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

Our regions are an integral part of Victoria’s culture and economy – in many ways, the most integral part. That’s what this Regional Statement is all about.

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to delivering the services and infrastructure that regional Victorians need to prosper.

Work is already underway on hundreds of projects to address these needs, and more are on the way.

We want to be a government for all Victorians. A government that listens, responds and gets on with it.

This Statement for regional Victoria outlines our priorities, policies and projects funded so far. The Statement also details our vision for a new, more collaborative approach to regional government.

Regional population growth is a great vote of confidence in the quality of life that regional Victoria offers. Population growth, if managed well, can bring significant opportunities through new skills and economic activity.

For these reasons, this plan reflects our aim for strong regional growth, but in a way that preserves and strengthens the unique qualities of our regional communities. Equally it recognises the complex and dynamic nature of the unique challenges facing rural and regional Victoria.

The independent Regional Economic Development and Services Review (“the Regional Review”) was developed with extensive whole-of-government input, and was the product of significant stakeholder consultation across business, community and local government.

The Regional Review contains 61 recommendations to drive regional economic growth, including:

• Changes to the way government works with regional Victorians to determine and implement regional priorities.
• Growing the food and fibre, and tourism sectors, including by attracting investment into the visitor economy and adding more value to primary products and services.
• Improvements to the productivity of the road and rail network to benefit regional producers, and better access to ICT in regional areas.
• Expanding access to early childhood education, and stronger pathways from school to work.
• Stronger, place-based approaches to addressing disadvantage.

This Regional Statement takes into account the recommendations of the Review and the views of stakeholders. It also provides an overview of the significant work underway across government to invest in services and policies for the benefit of the regions.
Since coming to office, we’ve developed new plans and invested in regional cities and communities. We’re proud of that, but it can’t end here.

Every Victorian deserves access to high quality government services, wherever they live and whatever their personal circumstances. And we want to work with regional and rural businesses to create jobs and drive growth.

The following section of the Regional Statement details how we are getting on with it.

Further information on these and other government initiatives in regional Victoria can be found at www.regions.vic.gov.au
The regional Victorian economy was worth $66.9 billion in 2014 and is responsible for about a third of Victoria’s $36 billion export trade. Over 650,000 regional Victorians are employed across the State.

The Andrews Labor Government wants to ensure our regions are made up of strong communities. For communities to thrive regional Victorians need access to good local jobs.

Victoria’s economy would be nothing without our regions. From food, fibre and wine to tourism, innovation and renewable energy, it’s where the traditional and the new come together.

The way we work and the things we produce in regional Victoria are changing. Back in 2005, manufacturing was the largest employing industry in regional Victoria. It is now fourth, behind healthcare, agriculture and retail.

Government and local communities need to work together to deliver the projects and services that will bring more jobs and families to regional Victoria, so businesses can maximise opportunities and succeed.

Funding our future

The $500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) is growing jobs, building infrastructure and strengthening communities throughout regional Victoria. As a dedicated regional development fund, RJIF addresses key challenges and opportunities to unlock regional Victoria’s growth potential.

RJIF is complemented by other statewide funds that focus on jobs and growth:

- The $508 million Premier’s Jobs and Investment Fund will drive economic growth, create stable jobs in Victoria and help foster new, innovative businesses.
- The $200 million Future Industries Fund will support the six high-growth industries that will define our economic future, including food and fibre and new energy technology.
- The $100 million Back to Work Scheme will give businesses an incentive to hire unemployed youth and the long-term unemployed. It’s a real plan to reduce youth unemployment.
• The $200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund will drive growth, create jobs and boost exports from paddock to port. We will work with the Victorian Farmers’ Federation and other regional stakeholders as we design and roll out the fund.

Sovereign Hill by day and night

More than half a million people visit Sovereign Hill each year. Sovereign Hill contributes more than $228 million of economic activity each year to Ballarat and Victoria, creating and sustaining 1422 full-time, casual and part-time jobs. The Andrews Labor Government’s $8 million commitment to upgrade the Sovereign Hill by day and by night will further boost Sovereign Hill as a driver of economic growth and tourism. The project will create a new sound and light show night experience, enhanced play space and indigenous areas, a new costume school and a 32-bed accommodation facility.

Agriculture

Agriculture and farming families, firms and workers are at the heart of rural and regional Victoria. In 2014-15, Victoria’s food and fibre exports reached a record $12 billion. We want to ensure Victorian exports continue to grow and that regional businesses have the best access to global markets, particularly in the Asian region. That’s why we have:

• Established the $20 million Food Source Victoria program, to help agri-food businesses work together to grow exports, create new jobs and promote their unique products to the world.

• Kicked off our program of inbound trade missions to regional Victoria connecting global buyers with our best regional producers. Just recently, we hosted visits by 150 international buyers from Asia, Europe and the Middle East to Victoria’s 21 wine regions, followed by Food and Beverage Trade Week, hosting over 240 international buyers and investors, to sample our world class food and beverages.

• Supported our fruit growers to export through the global Now! In Season promotion – a joint initiative with Austrade and industry to promote our citrus, table grapes, stone fruit, apples and pears.

• Invested in the projects that underpin farming jobs, such as irrigated water, ICT and safer rural roads and bridges. Producers and councils will be able to share in $200 million of funding for these projects from the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund.

• Begun growing the next generation of farmers, producers, exporters and innovators through the Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship program and the Young Farmers Ministerial Advisory Council.

1,2 The Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund is subject to the successful passage of the Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Bill 2015.
Tourism and events

Victoria has the best of everything. Regional Victoria attracts over 13 million domestic and over 400,000 international visitors each year and its tourism and events industry already generates 110,000 jobs each year, but we want to grow tourism across regional Victoria by stimulating new investment, improving the visitor experience and helping with marketing and product development.

The new Brand Victoria will showcase what our state has to offer, selling our cultural diversity, world-class events, natural attractions and landscapes and diverse regions to Australia and the world.

Following the Visitor Economy Review, we have created Visit Victoria and tasked it with driving tourism and events across the State. Bringing together Tourism Victoria and the Victorian Major Events Company and a new conventions division, the new entity aims to grow regional Victoria’s $11 billion visitor economy.

Visit Victoria will have a distinct Regional Division, with its own General Manager, designed to work directly with Regional Tourism Boards and operators to grow tourism in Victoria’s regions.

The new entity will also be charged with growing regional Victoria’s enviable calendar of events. It means a more resilient tourism and events industry – and that means a stronger State.

The Government will also invest $3 million to embark on an ambitious regional marketing campaign, highlighting regional Victoria’s treasures and showcasing our regions.

A new Ministerial Advisory Committee will work closely with industry experts in fields such as international education, arts and culture, and sport to develop an action plan to attract tourism investment and visitors to regional Victoria.

That’s why we are supporting investment in appropriate nature-based tourism that helps Victoria to preserve and protect our natural environment while enabling people to visit and enjoy our wonderful natural landscapes. We have also:

• Provided $19 million from the RJIF to complete stages two and three of the 145 kilometre Grampians Peaks Trail, expected to create 35 full-time jobs and boost the local economy by $6.4 million each year.
• Invested $25 million to revive the Ballarat Station precinct to revitalise Ballarat’s CBD into a commercial and cultural hub. The redevelopment includes a proposed hotel and convention centre.
• Provided $30 million for the next stage of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre.
• Enhanced marine infrastructure with $13.5 million allocated for the Portarlington Safe Harbour Development.
• Committed $1 million to develop the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park.

Budj Bim

Aboriginal culture and heritage also presents a growing regional tourism opportunity, opening up new prospects for generating jobs and income for regional and Indigenous communities. For example, Budj Bim in Victoria’s south-west hosts the only remains of Aboriginal stone houses found in Australia, as well as a sophisticated system of channels, fish traps and weirs used for farming eels. That’s why the Government has recommended Budj Bim as Victoria’s number one priority for UNESCO World Heritage listing. If successful, Budj Bim will be the first place to be recognised in Australia for exclusively Aboriginal cultural values.
Renewable energy

Victoria is taking the lead on climate change action and becoming a low-carbon economy. We want to support regional Victorians to take advantage of the significant job opportunities expected to emerge in the new energy industries that will drive this transition.

The Government’s Renewable Energy Roadmap sets out our plan for accelerating development of renewable energy generation in Victoria to reduce emissions, create jobs and put downward pressure on energy prices.

The $20 million New Energy Jobs Fund will support Victorian-based new energy technology projects that create or preserve long-term sustainable jobs. It is also aimed at increasing the uptake of renewable energy generation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and driving innovation in new energy technologies.

We have also launched an initiative to use our energy purchasing power to source renewable energy certificates from new projects in Victoria, bringing forward around $200 million of new investment in renewables.

We will continue our leadership in this area, building a strong future for our state in renewable energy that will deliver major benefits for regional Victoria.

Small business

Regional Victoria is home to around 28 per cent of our small businesses which make up by far the largest proportion of businesses in regional Victoria, providing jobs and contributing to social cohesion and export growth.

The Small Business Festival Victoria is the Government’s annual small business month comprising an extensive program of events aimed at providing ideas and information to start and grow a business.

This year, almost half of the events were hosted in regional Victoria and access to the festival’s regional events continued to expand with the addition of two new regional festivals in Shepparton and Mildura. They joined existing regional festivals in Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, North East Victoria, Gippsland, and along the Great South Coast.

Creative industries

A thriving arts and cultural scene helps make rural and regional Victoria a great place to live and visit.

Regional Victoria is famous for the number and quality of its art galleries and its local artists are known internationally.

This year, the Ballarat Art Gallery is the exclusive Victorian host of the 2015 Archibald Prize exhibition and the Government is looking at how we can pursue similar opportunities for regional Victoria through the development of Victoria’s first creative industries strategy.

We have committed $86 million over four years to upgrade racing infrastructure and facilities for patrons, particularly at racing and training venues in regional areas.

Key projects funded include:

- $3.4 million for the reconstruction of the Seymour Course.
- $407,000 to upgrade the harness tracks at Mildura and Horsham.
- Supporting the re-opening of the Traralgon greyhound track and the Traralgon Cup.
- Track fencing upgrades at Donald and Bairnsdale.
- Raceday attractions including the Anzac Day Races at Avoca, and Australia Day races at tracks across regional Victoria.

Racing

Victoria is the proud leader of Australian racing, generating more than $2.8 billion in economic activity and supporting more than 26,500 full time jobs.

Country racing alone contributes almost $940 million in annual economic output, and regional Victoria is home to around 80 per cent of trainers and breeders.
Events like Castlemaine State Festival, which is Australia’s oldest regional state festival, attract large numbers of visitors who flock to the town for this biennial event. The 2013 festival attracted record breaking crowds and box office numbers and partnered with 35 local industries and business and 70 sponsors, philanthropists and government bodies. The calculated economic contribution for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival was $2.48m.

We have invested $20 million to support arts and cultural hubs across Victoria, and it’s already bringing results.

For example, our $2.8 million plan for small town transformations will help places with a population less than 2000 bring the community together through large-scale art projects.

Through the Major Events Fund we have secured the renowned international Marilyn Monroe Exhibition for the Bendigo Art Gallery which will attract visitors from across Australia.

Ararat Arts Precinct Development

Built in 1898, the Ararat Town Hall is a Western Victorian landmark. The Ararat Regional Art Gallery and the Ararat Performing Arts Centre have been co-located in the building since 1978.

$3.7 million is being provided through the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund for the $5.29 million Ararat Arts Precinct revitalisation project that will improve the Gallery and Performing Arts spaces. It will also include works to provide café and bar spaces and improve the public interface of the facilities.

This new project will maximise long term investment in the arts, enhance the visitor experience offered by both facilities and enable the gallery to present its nationally important textile art collection and major exhibitions as unique tourist drawcards.

Water

Water is central to our social fabric and fundamental to supporting a healthy environment, prosperous economy and healthy thriving communities now and into the future. Victoria has established strong foundations to help us realise opportunities to improve water management across our state. However, Victoria is also facing challenges of climate change, population growth and changing economic conditions. We require a new statewide framework to realise these opportunities to improve water management and address the challenges facing Victoria.

The Victorian Government is developing a new plan for water management that will set the strategic direction for water in Victoria for decades to come. The focus of the water plan will be on enhancing our social fabric through:

- Supporting jobs and economic productivity across the state.
- Improving the health of our waterways and catchments.
- Enabling water management to play an essential role in our health and wellbeing to improve liveability and recreational opportunities.
• Supporting Aboriginal values.
• Preparing for drought, flood and climate change.
• Realising the potential of Victoria’s water grid and markets.
• Delivering safe, reliable and affordable water and sanitation services.

Our water plan will also build on and improve the statewide framework to realise these opportunities to improve water management and address the challenges facing Victoria.

Better engagement with local communities is fundamental to improving water management across Victoria and enhancing our social fabric. The Andrews Labor Government is committed to engaging broadly with our stakeholders and local communities.

We all know the incredible impact of the Millennium drought. Our water storages dropped to unimaginably low levels and crops failed across the state. Our sporting fields were rock hard, gardens were brown and our children playing under the sprinkler was a forgotten image. Our lakes emptied – not only did it impact on our economy but on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

During this time, we saw communities come together and become innovative in terms of using every drop of water wisely.

Since 1 January 2015, there has been below average rainfall across Victoria. The picture on just how dry it is going to be is changing quickly. Science tells us that average temperatures will continue to increase – there will be hotter and dryer spells but also more intense, extreme rain.

These conditions are already affecting parts of our state. This will be the second consecutive poor season for most farmers in Victoria’s north west. Some are facing their third poor season.

In the short term, we have acted to support those that have been hardest hit by fast tracking drought support for farming communities. We are keeping a close watch on the situation and will assess the need for future support as conditions unfold.

We also need to think about how we better physically move our water through our water grid and the rules and processes that control how our water can be traded and delivered. Clear information about our water system is important for people to make their own decisions so that we all share the benefits of this precious resource.

Through the water plan we will look at all options for how to optimise our water grid. The Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government and water corporations to improve security of supply for the community, the environment and to promote regional development opportunities.
Planning

Victoria’s population is forecast to grow by 2.2 million people to 7.7 million by 2031. But we know that growth in regional areas will be uneven.

Forty per cent of all regional population growth over that period is forecast to occur in the regional cities of Greater Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat.

Some areas are forecast to suffer significant population falls, including in the shires of Buloke, Gannawarra, Corangamite and the Southern Grampians.

A stronger planning system will help councils manage growth. In particular, the Government is committed to supporting the more productive uses of regional non-urban land through a planning system that facilitates growth of primary production and rural industries. We’re therefore providing direct guidance with planning scheme amendments, with planning officers located throughout regional Victoria.

We’re also helping support smaller rural councils to become more sustainable and develop the local economy, providing $3.5 million for the Networked Rural Councils program.

Geelong Authority

We established the Geelong Authority to advise the Minister for Planning on major planning applications to create jobs and growth and ways to attract investment in central Geelong.

It’s all about giving local residents and leaders a real voice in the future of their city – cutting through the red tape and bureaucracy to get things done.

Vision 2 is a plan to renew Geelong’s CBD, with a new city square, major street enhancements and a new direction to attract investment, jobs and growth.

But the plan has struggled to get off paper. The Geelong Authority will advise the Minister on what council and local businesses need to make Vision 2 a reality.

WHAT’S NEXT

• We will invest up to $25 million from the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to identify opportunities to support the competitiveness of local agriculture, improve their access to markets and attract investment through better co-ordination of planning for industry development and by upgrading ‘first and last kilometre’ routes across Victoria. We will work with industry and local councils to identify and prioritise these opportunities.

• Back to Work Central Goldfields and Back to Work Shepparton will focus and co-ordinate efforts to improve job prospects for disadvantaged job seekers. These trials will bring all tiers of government together with local employers and combine Back to Work initiatives with other employment, training and social services to help people find and keep good local jobs.

• An $80 million package to bring more major events to regional Victoria and Melbourne, along with $11 million to upgrade buildings, toilets, paths and roads and build new facilities in parks across the state.

3 The Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund is subject to the successful passage of the Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Bill 2015.
• We will develop a contestable pipeline of the ten most significant regional tourism projects to fully realise the economic potential of iconic assets (e.g. Budj Bim, and activating rail trains in the North East).

• We will improve the way we support rural and regional businesses by transitioning our Regional Development Victoria (RDV) offices into Regional Business Centres, beginning with Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and Traralgon. The Centres will provide a one-stop-shop for businesses looking to grow, and will house new trade and investment teams, economic development specialists from across State Government departments, and will work with local and Commonwealth governments to access grant programs and advice.

• We will work with Regional Partnerships to identify investment and infrastructure opportunities and promote regional Victoria as an investment destination.

• We will continue to partner with relevant agencies, service providers and industry associations to build export capability in regional Victoria through an Export Skills and Training Program.

• We will finalise strategies for each of the six high-growth sectors under the $200 million Future Industries Fund and ensure that each supports the growth and development of these sectors in rural and regional Victoria.

• We will boost visitation and expenditure in regional Victoria by working more closely with Regional Tourism Boards to identify specific regional tourism segments (such as food and wine, cultural or nature-based tourism) and develop unique products, events, branding and marketing.

• We will identify projects that are of State or regional significance where government consideration of the need for intervention (e.g. exercising Ministerial ‘call-in’ powers) may be able to fast-track appropriate developments that boost jobs and local economies. We will have criteria and processes in place within six months.

• A Renewable Energy Action Plan setting out a series of initiatives to capture Victoria’s share of the estimated $14.7 billion in renewable energy investment expected in Australia by 2020, including actions to support the uptake of energy storage.

• A new Water Plan for Victoria, to drive water efficiency and the best use of our water resources.

• We will use our $200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to invest $20 million into the next stage of the Macalister Irrigation District project as a co-investment with Commonwealth Government and industry.

• We will support more productive use of non-urban regional land by trialing new systems to assist businesses looking to expand through the Agribusiness Development Facilitation model.

• Establishing a new Animal Industries Advisory Committee to report on how the planning system could deliver clearer rules and greater confidence for farmers and councils around animal husbandry, while balancing environmental outcomes and community expectations.
For regional Victorians, reliable public transport is about connecting communities to sporting events, jobs, regional centres and education opportunities.

We are improving safety for regional Victorians by upgrading the regional road and rail networks, reducing travel times for freight and making it easier for visitors to get to regional Victoria.

Investing in road and rail infrastructure is also about creating jobs and building stronger regional communities.

Regional rail

The Regional Rail Link project opened this year. It was the largest public transport infrastructure project ever undertaken in Victoria, with 90 kilometres of new track, new and upgraded stations, major bridge works and two level crossing removals.

The project provides dedicated tracks for regional trains from Melbourne to Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, boosting the capacity and reliability of services from these major regional centres.

In addition to key infrastructure, the Andrews Labor Government is also committed to building trains and trams in Victoria to support local jobs and provide education and training. The 2015-16 Victorian Budget invested more than $2 billion in a pipeline of rolling stock. This includes:

- $257 million for 21 new VLocity regional carriages to be built in Victoria, including $115 million for new train stabling and maintenance in Waurn Ponds.
- $90 million for five new X'Trapolis trains to be built in Ballarat.
- We have released a 10-year plan for purchasing new trains and trams, which includes a significant expansion of the regional fleet. It’s Victoria’s first-ever rolling stock strategy. The strategy outlines our plan to commission the next generation high capacity regional trains, to cater for strong patronage growth and more peak services.
- We’re also working with the TAFE sector to develop programs for apprentices in the rolling stock industry, training the next generation of engineers.
Regional Network Development Plan

The Regional Network Development Plan will move Victoria away from ad hoc service improvements, towards a more coordinated regional public transport network where train and bus services work together to get people where they need to go quicker and safer.

For the first time, regional communities were consulted on the specific public transport needs of their region.

A Regional Transport Advisory Group was established to oversee an extensive community consultation period held from 23 June until 11 September. Community and stakeholder workshops were held in regional cities and towns across Gippsland, Grampians, Hume, Loddon-Mallee and Barwon-South West.

More than 1,400 community members and stakeholders attended workshops and over 15,000 pieces of feedback were collected through the online survey and online discussion tool.

During the consultation, a range of issues and challenges that passengers are experiencing on the existing network as well as many ideas for better outcomes and solutions into the future were raised. This information will be fed back into a plan to address the short, medium and long term regional infrastructure needs of communities.

Regional buses

As part of the Government’s $100 million investment to improving bus networks across Victoria, stronger bus networks will be developed in regional areas. We will work with communities and councils to plan new bus routes, fix the missing links and add more services.

A new bus network has been introduced in Geelong and the Bellarine, providing better bus connections to trains. We have consulted with the local community, bus operators and council on the future Bendigo bus network. We will develop future bus networks in Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley.

Consultation with communities and local councils will be central to bus planning for the future.

Freight rail

Our Government is boosting investment in rail infrastructure to lower the cost of getting critical grains, minerals and other produce exports to port.

We are progressing the $416 million Murray Basin Rail Project, which will fully standardise and upgrade the entire Murray Basin rail network.

The Government has provided up to $220 million in the 2015-16 Victorian Budget for the project, with $5 million fast-tracked in February to get work started on critical maintenance and safety works.

Major works are expected to commence in the second half of 2016 and 270 jobs will be created during construction.

This project will make supply chains more efficient, give businesses a greater choice of ports to export their commodities and sustain and create jobs in agriculture and construction.
It is estimated that it will reduce the number of truck trips to port by 20,000 due to the higher axle loading and improved standard of the track.

It’s all about boosting the safety, capacity and reliability of freight services in Northern Victoria and better connecting primary producers to the State’s major ports in Portland, Geelong and Melbourne.

Regional roads

We are taking action to improve the safety and productivity of Victoria’s rural and regional road network. This is vital for locals, visitors and businesses alike.

- The Government has committed $1 billion to upgrade and repair unsafe and congested roads and bridges in regional communities. This commitment recognises that local communities and industry needs to be better supported and Government will continue to work with councils to identify their infrastructure needs and allocate funding accordingly.
- We are investing $76 million to strengthen bridges on key freight routes to increase the overall safety of the road network and reduce travel time for heavy vehicles. Work is expected to commence this year on the first stage of the program, which will focus on 17 priority bridges that have deteriorated to such an extent that semi-trailers and B-doubles cannot use them.
- $106 million has been committed to construct the Drysdale Bypass, which is crucial for the wellbeing of the town and will support local jobs.
- Subject to the successful passage of the Port of Melbourne lease legislation, our new $200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund will enable key freight routes to be upgraded to accommodate heavier vehicles. This will drive economic growth, create jobs, boost exports and support Victorian farmers from paddock to port.4
- $50 million in the Safer Country Crossings Program, boosting safety at 52 priority roads and crossings which carry high speed passenger trains or a high number of heavy vehicles. The upgrades will include works to install flashing lights and boom gates. $2 million was fast-tracked to begin works on three level crossing upgrades: at Springhurst near Wangaratta, Gnotuk near Camperdown and Pirron Yallock near Colac.

Road safety

It’s not just about economic productivity, it’s also about keeping people safe on country roads. That’s why we’re also upgrading the local roads that families use every day. We are investing:

- $87 million to resurface unsafe, deteriorating road surfaces across the state, to give families more peace of mind.
- $3 million to improve traffic and safety on High Street in partnership with the communities of Drysdale and Portarlington.
- $50 million in the Safer Country Crossings Program, boosting safety at 52 priority roads and crossings which carry high speed passenger trains or a high number of heavy vehicles. The upgrades will include works to install flashing lights and boom gates. $2 million was fast-tracked to begin works on three level crossing upgrades: at Springhurst near Wangaratta, Gnotuk near Camperdown and Pirron Yallock near Colac.

Telecommunications

Information and telecommunications are critical for regional business competitiveness. In an increasingly “online” world, they are also vital to supporting children’s education, providing quality healthcare and community activities. But broadband and mobile coverage is variable across regions, restricting business productivity and the ability of communities to fully participate. These limitations also affect how easily people can connect with one another, and put them at risk during emergencies.

The Government has co-invested $21 million with Testra to the Commonwealth Government’s Mobile Black Spot Programme securing an $86 million investment for Victorian regional communities.

4 The Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund is subject to the successful passage of the Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Bill 2015.
This will see 110 new mobile towers built in regional Victoria over the next three years, providing approximately 12,000 households and businesses with new access to mobile services. The new infrastructure is expected to generate up to $120 million per annum in productivity benefits for regional Victoria, benefiting residents, businesses and tourists to these areas.

The Government worked closely with the Emergency Management Commissioner to ensure that bushfire vulnerable areas were addressed.

**WHAT’S NEXT**

- We will finalise a Regional Network Development Plan for regional Victoria by the end of 2015. As part of this Plan, we are:
  - Improving long distance rail services;
  - Responding to regional communities about their specific public transport needs; and
  - Improving connections and services to regional Victoria.

- We will deliver Bendigo Metro Rail which will provide a commuter train service to support Bendigo’s growth and improve access to the Bendigo CBD, with an increased number of services running from Epsom, Eaglehawk, and Kangaroo Flat to Bendigo.

- We will deliver better reception for mobile devices along Victoria’s busiest V/Line rail routes through the **$18 million Regional Rail Connectivity Project** which will provide government grants for mobile telephone carriers to improve their services along the following routes: Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Seymour, Traralgon. These rail routes carry over 13 million passenger trips annually, and about 40 per cent of the rail routes are affected by mobile coverage black spots, disrupting passengers phone and internet services. This investment will make it easier to commute to and from regional Victoria, and strengthen the visitor experience.
Every Victorian has the right to the knowledge and skills to shape their lives, regardless of their background, personal circumstances or where they live.

There is abundant evidence that higher educational attainment significantly increases life opportunities, employment choices and lifetime income.

Moreover, regional Victoria’s economy is changing rapidly. Global forces are shaping the market for jobs and the industries of the future. Tertiary education and training will increasingly play an integral role in regional Victoria, generating social and economic benefits for individuals, communities and local industries.

The public delivery of vocational education and training through TAFE is vital in supporting regional communities, as is the improved access for regional young people to participate in higher education.

Access to a quality education shouldn’t be determined by geography but a recent Auditor-General’s report found that rural students are falling behind their peers in Melbourne on academic achievement, attendance and school completion. Clearly, we need to do better.

That’s why we are investing record amounts into regional schools and rescuing rural TAFE campuses, because the Education State extends to the banks of the Murray, not the borders of Melbourne.

The 2015-16 Victorian Budget delivered the single biggest injection of funds in our education system in Victoria’s history. It will transform regional kinders, schools and TAFEs.

We also set ambitious targets designed to lift school results state-wide. But targets can only be achieved if we have the best resources available to all students.

Early childhood

Every child has the right to the best start in life, with access to safe, quality early childhood services and support to learn, play and grow.

A good early childhood education is the best possible start for our kids, especially for families in rural and regional areas.

Fears that the Commonwealth Government may strip families of their right to 15 hours of kindergarten every week has only made things worse.

We know that parents just want certainty and confidence in the system, and early childhood services just want to get on with their job. That’s why we are providing:

- $50 million to build and upgrade kindergartens and children’s hubs across the state, allowing them to grow and deliver better and more convenient services for families.
- New integrated children’s centres in Highton and Bonshaw and we’re upgrading nine early learning facilities in Macedon Ranges, Greater Bendigo and Ballarat.
• $83.7 million to support kindergartens to transition to new staff qualifications and ratio requirements.
• $9 million for specialised, tailored support for children with disabilities or developmental delays before they start school. Everyone deserves the best start.

Schools

Every family has the right to access great schools for their kids with great teaching in every classroom. Our kids deserve the best education system in Australia. Under our plan, every single student in every single government school will be better off.

From the start of the 2016 school year, schools around Victoria will share in $747 million extra funding over four years to support great schools for every community and great teachers in every classroom. This means that in 2016, rural and regional schools will gain an average of $456 per student as a result of equity loadings – more than double what their metropolitan peers are receiving. This additional funding will help our regional kids reach their full potential.

In addition, we’re providing:
• Nearly $42 million on new schools in rural and regional locations and just over $120 million on modernisations and upgrades at rural and regional schools.
• $30 million to improve the teaching of science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, which will include funding for teachers from rural and regional Victoria.
• We are also establishing 10 Tech Schools across Victoria, including in Gippsland, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, at a cost of $125 million. Tech Schools will give secondary school students a real start at a hands-on education – not in place of a comprehensive education, but as a vital part of it.

• $13.7 million for Breakfast Clubs to make sure no student misses out on the most important meal of the day. This will help around 7,500 students in rural and regional schools. This is part of our package to support struggling families with the extra costs of schooling, such as uniforms, textbooks and eye glasses.
• Our $148 million Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund will help parents cover the costs of these essential parts of a child’s development and learning. It also supports campgrounds and tourism in regional areas.

Go Goldfields

We’re supporting Go Goldfields, an alliance of agencies working together to support vulnerable kids in the Central Goldfields Shire. It has already produced real change, including improved literacy levels, decreased school absenteeism and reduced incidences of family violence. It’s community initiatives like this that the Government has a role to support.
Skills and training

Every Victorian has the right to access quality training to get the skills they need for the job they want in order to contribute fully to the prosperity and future of our State.

TAFE cuts closed down campuses across our state. Other institutes that managed to survive had to cut staff and courses. This should never have been allowed to happen.

TAFE campuses form the heart of many regional communities. It’s where local jobs and businesses and ideas are born. Supporting regional training is supporting regional growth.

Moving to Melbourne shouldn’t be your only option to study or train and we know people who train in the regions are more likely to stay there. That’s why we want to make our local TAFE campuses stronger.

• Our $320 million TAFE Rescue Fund is already flowing – reopening closed campuses, upgrading buildings, workshops and labs and helping TAFEs get back on their feet. Campuses like Bendigo Kangan Institute, Federation Training, SunrTAFE, GoTAFE, the Gordon, South West TAFE, and Wodonga TAFE have received emergency funding.

• The Back To Work Scheme will mean businesses that provide training opportunities for eligible employees will be able to receive up to $4000.

• A further $15 million is being invested in Skills and Jobs Centres, which will feature at regional TAFEs as a first point-of-call for students who are looking to start training, for those workers needing to re-skill and for unemployed workers needing support for retraining and job placement.

• A $2 million scholarship program will encourage more students to build their career on the land, providing study grants to ambitious professionals who live in regional Victoria and work in agri-food businesses. Half these funds will be dedicated to women.

Regional Higher Education

The Andrews Labor Government understands the importance of the higher education sector to regional Victorians. Young people need opportunities to study close to where they live and rely on thriving regionally based university campuses, and they need the opportunities available from strong pathways between schools, TAFEs and Universities. The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund presents new opportunities for regionally based university campuses, supporting investments that will deliver improved education and training outcomes.
WHAT’S NEXT

• A $70 million package to bolster jobs and training. This recently announced package includes our $50 million TAFE Back to Work Fund that will support TAFEs to train local students in the skills that local industries and businesses need. This is a real and targeted way to match up workers and industries. The Fund will enable TAFEs to better engage with local businesses to seek their input on course design. A new $20 million Reconnect Program will also help address the drop in early school leavers taking up training.

• We will work with professionals, parents, caregivers, academics, experts and the broader Victorian community to develop substantial reforms that transform early childhood health, development and learning. The Education State Early Childhood Consultation Paper, launched earlier this year, has been designed to start this discussion on identifying reform directions, looking at all parts of the early childhood experience. This will include consideration of how we can better support children in regional and rural areas to access the early childhood services they need.

• We will develop a $34 million Regional Skills and Training package to support local communities and in particular disadvantaged groups and areas to access relevant training that leads to local jobs.
No matter where we live, whether it’s in the city or in the regions, we deserve to be able to access high-quality, timely health care.

The Andrews Labor Government is investing significant resources in improving health, ambulance services and infrastructure in regional Victoria.

Victorians have a right to feel proud of the world-class doctors, nurses, and paramedics working in our health system. The Government is committed to making sure that our hospitals meet the needs of our growing and ageing community – that means the right care provided locally and specialist care provided at major hospitals. We recognise there are difficulties that regional communities face in accessing health care and that this can have an impact on health outcomes.

As an industry, healthcare has boomed in recent years, with 65 per cent of all jobs added in regional Victoria in the past 10 years coming in the healthcare and social services sector.

More than 98,000 regional Victorians are employed in the healthcare and social services sector – 16 per cent of all regional Victorian jobs. Healthcare now accounts for 19 per cent of jobs in Wangaratta and Hindmarsh and 18 per cent in Warrnambool.

Improving health in the regions

The Government is providing an extra $1.38 billion for our health system for new buildings and vital equipment, new health initiatives and increased capacity. This will save lives across our state.

We are investing $10 million in a new cardiac catheterisation lab at Ballarat Base Hospital, so locals don’t have to drive to Melbourne for urgent heart treatment.

We are also progressing planning for the proposed redevelopment of the Goulburn Valley Health Shepparton campus, so it can support the growing population.

Almost 35 per cent of the $200 million Hospital Beds Rescue Fund has been given to health services in regional areas to open beds and points of care right across the state – that’s an extra $19.1 million per year.

The Hospital Beds Rescue Fund will see an additional 4600 patients in regional Victoria treated every year.

New beds are already open across rural Victoria at health service in Ballarat, Mildura, Bass Coast, Castlemaine, Djerriwarrh, Echuca, Kilmore, West Gippsland and Yarrawonga.

We have also provided $1.1 million for dental capital in regional and rural Victoria.

Our $4 million investment in the National Centre for Farmer Health is rebuilding the Centre to its former strength after funding cuts almost caused it to close, so it can continue to improve quality of life for Victorian farmers by providing unique health assessments, promotion and advice.
We are also exploring ways to secure a statewide tele-health platform to help patients consult with specialists, doctors and nurses. For people in remote rural communities, it’s all about bringing the best standards of care closer to home.

Some regional cities have smoking rates far higher than the Victorian average. Prevention is better than a cure, and our smoking ban for outdoor dining areas will protect children from second-hand smoke and take smokers further out of the public eye.

**Ambulance**

We have a plan to end the ambulance crisis. We are working in partnership with paramedics to improve response times, reduce ambulance ramping and improve transfer times for patients. We immediately resolved the ambulance dispute and have invested an additional $99 million to improve response times and give our hardworking paramedics the resources they need and the support they deserve.

A $60 million Response Time Rescue Fund is also on the way – developed alongside paramedics who know best – so families get the emergency care they need, when they need it.

The Ambulance Performance and Policy Committee’s final report in December will provide a clear way forward about how the Response Time Rescue Fund can reduce ambulance response times so that Victorians can receive the emergency care they need sooner.

Part of this work will include reviewing call-taking and dispatch procedures at the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority so that ambulances can arrive sooner.

Regional Victorians deserve to know about the state of emergency services in their region. Under this government, ambulance response time data will be publicly released every quarter.

**Aboriginal health**

Just over half of Aboriginal Victorians live in regional and rural areas. Partnering with Aboriginal communities to improve health equality is an essential part of closing the gap.

- We are supporting 39 Local Indigenous Networks across Victoria to provide a space for all local Aboriginal community members to lead their community.
- Through the Taskforce 1000 project, we are working to improve the lives and circumstances of the more than 1000 Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care.
- We are also supporting the operation of eight regional Aboriginal health committees, each involving regional hospitals, mainstream services and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. These committees are helping to plan and deliver $8.26 million in social and health initiatives.
Mental health

Life is tough for many regional families. Part of the problem is that the mental health services that are so readily available in Melbourne aren’t as accessible in rural areas. This must change.

- We are developing a 10 Year Mental Health Plan. It will make sure that mental health services are there for individuals and their carers, when and where they need it.
- The new Mental Health and Police Response Partnerships in Ballarat, Goulburn Valley, Gippsland, Wodonga and the South West will deliver a more targeted and timely response.
- Our $750,000 investment in Men’s Sheds will reduce social isolation and increase awareness of anxiety and depression among people that are less likely to seek the help they need.

The NDIS

We’re proud to be rolling out the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Victoria. Through the NDIS, people with a disability will get the support they need to live full and active lives – go to University or TAFE, get a job and be active members of their community.

- In Victoria the NDIS is being trialled in the Barwon area, with 4392 people with a disability participating as at 30 June 2015. Of the 4392 participants, 1449 of those people are receiving much needed support for the very first time.
- Regional Victorians will be some of the first to benefit from the full scheme, with Central Highlands rolling out from 1 January 2017 and Loddon region rolling out from 1 May 2017.
- Our Government will be providing $2.5 billion a year to the scheme by the time it is fully implemented state-wide.

Children and young people

Young people in rural and regional Victoria are at higher risk of being socially isolated. We want to make sure we hear their voices and that our policies reflect their views. That’s why we are setting up a new youth reference group with young people from different areas, backgrounds and experiences to help guide our new youth policy framework.

We also invite young Victorians to have their say online about issues that are important to them through www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au.

We have built great connections with the school-based Advance program, which encourages young people to volunteer in their local communities on projects or activities of their choice. Around 40 per cent of all participants in the program come from rural communities.

Victoria’s innovative FReeZA program continues to provide drug- and alcohol-free events throughout rural and regional Victoria, and we are expanding the reach of organisations such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth and YACVIC to connect with multicultural young people in regional Victoria.
We are providing an extra $257 million to boost child protection and family services. A better start for vulnerable kids is invaluable for them and for our whole society, now and in the future. Our plan includes:

- Up to 16 out-of-home care properties will be renovated or upgraded to ensure they provide a safe environment for kids.
- 13 child protection workers to boost after hours services across the state, including in regional areas such as Goulburn, Ovens Murray, Mallee and East Gippsland.
- $48.1 million in Child FIRST and Family Services, early intervention services that work with families before they reach crisis point.
- $21.3 million to keep a helpful eye on young people as they move from residential out of home care to independent living, making sure they are getting the training, support and education they need.

**WHAT’S NEXT**

- The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-19 sets out the government’s priorities and vision to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians, particularly over the next four years. This will include a focus on better leveraging Victorian Government investment in preventative health and advocate the Commonwealth Government for ongoing funding and collaboration on initiatives aimed at preventing avoidable chronic disease.
- We’re upgrading regional ambulance stations in Sale, Traralgon, Murchison, Orbost and Echuca, and building a new station in Wendouree, so that paramedics have the facilities they need to care for regional patients.
People in regional Victoria want the same as everyone else: the right to live a comfortable life and raise a family in peace and safety, alongside their friends and neighbours.

The issues are the same, but the solutions might be slightly different. Often, they require more input and advice from local communities, councils and experts – because locals know best.

Everyone should be able to feel safe in their communities and in their homes. That’s why we are doing our best to support the men and women who can keep us safe – giving them the resources, funding, information and equipment they need to do their job.

Nurturing a strong and diverse community is important, too: places where locals look out for each other, respect every family and faith, and celebrate our differences.

Family violence

Unfortunately, family violence disproportionately affects women in rural and regional communities more frequently than in Melbourne. Between 2013-14, 1,526 family violence reports were made to the police per 100,000 people in regional Victoria compared with 1,007 reports per 100,000 people in Melbourne.

Family violence is the number one law and order issue in Australia. It takes up a third of police work, costs our economy billions every year and clogs up regional courtrooms.

Far more seriously, it also takes the life of an Australian woman every single week. In fact, it’s the number one contributor to death, disability and injury in Australian women under the age of 45.

That’s why we have established Australia’s first Royal Commission into Family Violence. It is investigating our broken system from the ground up – and nothing is off limits.

• To date, we have provided over $80 million to tackle family violence through the 2015-16 Budget, which includes investment in regional and rural Victorian communities.

Regional Integration Committees are bringing together vital services to improve the way we respond to family violence and promote community awareness and education.

• We are providing $1 million for crisis accommodation and transport for women and children and a further $1 million to agencies that offer family violence counselling services.

• We are expanding the number of courts that provide specialised family violence services, including four additional specialised services in regional courts.

• The 2015-16 Budget is providing additional men’s behaviour change programs targeting offenders on community corrections orders and in prisons across the state.

• In regional Victoria, we have allocated $200,000 to the Mallee Sexual Assault Centre and Domestic Violence Service to boost counselling services and housing assistance.

• We are also providing $650,000 to fund 33 targeted projects to respond to family violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities.
Police and emergency services

When communities are threatened by fire and flood, regional Victorians work as one. We want to honour that effort with real support for the men and women who work on the frontline.

We are working hard to develop stronger, more effective emergency services across Victoria. It’s about giving them the resources they need to do their job. This includes:

- $50 million for planned burning on public land.
- A $750 million, 10-year power line bushfire safety program to reduce risk.
- Recruiting additional Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighters over the next four years.
- Rebuilding and upgrading a number of regional firefighting facilities including:
  - Huntly CFA and Buninyong fire stations.
  - Upgrading fire towers in the Grampians, Gippsland and south-west Victoria.
- Purchasing 70 new CFA trucks, at a cost of $33.5 million.
- Purchasing tray bodies for the next instalment of 112 new ultra-light G-Wagons, at a cost of $8 million.
- $40.8 million to rebuild or upgrade Government offices and depots at Broadford, Beaufort, Gellibrand, Mitta Mitta, Knoxfield and Swifts Creek.

The previous Government let down the people of the Latrobe Valley in 2014, when the region was engulfed in a mine fire. We can’t let it happen again. That’s why we are providing:

- $30 million to implement all of the Recommendations and Affirmations from the 2014 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry.
- $5.5 million to create a new CFA fire district in the Latrobe Valley to better prepare for and respond to fires.
- $3 million to establish a new Morwell Emergency Services Hub and with the latest technology, and $2.5 million for specialist mine fire training for firefighters.

Police officers keep us safe – but that’s not all they do. They’re a reassuring presence in every town, working with locals and businesses to build a strong community that looks out for each other. It’s the Government’s duty to give country cops the resources they need, so they can focus on the job.

- We’re upgrading the unsafe and unreliable police radio system with a secure and encrypted network. This will keep regional police safer when they’re on patrol.
- Fifteen new police officers will be on duty in the Bellarine Peninsula and Geelong area. We are also supplying tasers at all regional 24-hour police stations.
- A $148.6 million investment in 400 police custody officers so that sworn police officers across Victoria can get back onto the beat.
Tackling the ice crisis

Crystal methamphetamine or ice is a dangerous and highly addictive drug that has had a devastating impact in parts of Victoria, including some rural communities. The Victorian Government’s Ice Action Plan is a landmark $45.5 million effort to reduce the supply, demand and harm of this illicit drug that is ruining people’s lives, destroying families and damaging communities. Under the Plan, $18 million will be spent to expand rehabilitation for ice users, with a focus on regional Victoria. We will ensure users get the treatment they need and families the support they need.

Along with statewide action, we know that regional communities are best positioned to engage local resources to combat the use of ice. That’s why we are providing $500,000 to grassroots Community Ice Action Groups in regional and rural Victoria. This funding will allow local community members to come together for the first time to develop local solutions in the fight against ice.

These groups include:
- East Gippsland Ice Prevention Working Group, based in Orbost.
- Rotary Club of Warrnambool Daybreak Inc.
- Northern District Community Health Service, based in Kerang.
- Rochester and Elmore District Health Service.
- Macedon Ranges Local Safety Committee, based in Gisborne.
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, based in Mooroopna.
- AFL Gippsland, based in Morwell.
- Connect Youth, based in Donald.
- Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BADAC).
- Bendigo Safe Community Forum.
- The Centre for Continuing Education, based in Wangaratta.
- Leisure Networks Inc., based in Geelong.
- Project Ice Mildura.

WHAT’S NEXT

- The government will implement the Family Violence Royal Commission’s recommendations when its report is completed next year. Major reforms will take place so that family violence is prevented and Victorian women and children are safe in their homes.
- $20 million will fund a fleet of 47 firefighting aircraft and give our firefighters the critical resources they need on the frontline this summer. This includes two Large Air Tankers (LATs), which are some of the biggest firefighting aircraft in the world and critical in stopping the spread of bushfires.
- The deployment of Police Custody Officers in early 2016, including at priority pilot stations in Ballarat and Geelong. Other stations where Custody Officers will be deployed include Bairnsdale, Bendigo, Horsham, Mildura, Morwell, Shepparton, Swan Hill, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, Wodonga, and Sale. Police in these regional communities will be free to return to the beat.
• Over the next three years, Emergency Medical Response is being implemented at integrated CFA stations, meaning, firefighters will be dispatched at the same time as paramedics to attend to cardiac arrests and non-breathing patients. Specialist training will be provided so firefighters can provide basic life support and give CPR. Defibrillators will be installed on fire trucks.

• We will adopt place-based approaches to tackling disadvantage, focusing attention on areas and communities in rural and regional Victoria where it is most concentrated and entrenched. The nine new Regional Partnerships will have a role in identifying the most vulnerable communities and advising the Government to ensure our interventions are targeted and making a difference in the areas of highest need.

• We will provide additional support to agencies in regional Victoria so that they can deal with increased demand from family violence incidents. This includes **$52,000 grants for Family Violence Duty Lawyers** at Gippsland Community Legal Centre, Central Highlands Community Legal Centre, Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre, Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre, and the Murray Mallee Community Legal Centre.

• We want to ensure regional communities have the firefighting services they need so we’re recruiting new CFA firefighters, deploying new trucks and equipment, and **building new CFA stations** in Huntly and Buninyong.
Regional Victorian communities rely on a healthy natural environment. Victoria’s natural capital underpins almost every single economic foundation in rural areas and is crucial to regional prosperity and what makes regional cities and towns great places to live and raise a family.

A sustainable environment means sustainable jobs. Our Government is ready to support sustainable enterprises such as nature-based tourism, resource recovery / recycling industries and clean and innovative industries that have a natural home in the regions, such as new energy technology.

The $200 million Future Industries Fund will support the six high-growth industries that will define our economic future, including new energy technology.

Our State-wide Waste and Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan will guide investment in Victoria’s waste and resource recovery sector, creating new jobs and new markets for recovered resources. This will ensure the essential service of waste management can continue to be delivered safely and effectively as our population grows, supporting the quality of life in regional Victoria.

When it comes to protecting our environment, local knowledge is critical and Victoria’s rural and regional councils form the backbone of this effort.

These councils sometimes struggle to work through planning applications of great complexity and volume, so we’re working with councils to simplify the process because we want to get things done.

Environment and climate change

Biodiversity contributes to essential human needs such as clean air and water and supports our agricultural, tourism and natural resource industries. Our projects include:

• $7 million for the Landcare program, including $2 million for the current round of Victorian Landcare Grants. New and existing Landcare groups and networks across the state are able to apply for a grant to address their local environmental priorities.

• A $5.2 million Threatened Species Protection plan, taking immediate action on threatened species and habitat protection. This includes $200,000 for an innovative pilot to give community groups a way to raise funds. Their fundraising efforts will be matched by Government up to $25,000.

Victoria is taking the lead on climate change. We’re helping build a sustainable economy and encouraging regional Victorians to take advantage of the jobs that come with it.

To help restore Victoria’s reputation as a climate change leader, we will complete an independent review of the Climate Change Act and Victoria’s Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

We’re also working with regional communities to help make our cities and communities adaptable to a changing climate, including being prepared for extreme weather events. We have also:
• Provided $200,000 to Newstead 2021, a community group in central Victoria, to develop a master plan for transitioning the town of Newstead to 100 per cent renewable energy.

• Provided $100,000 to support the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, which is building a solar farm at the Black Forest Timber Mill in Woodend.

Local councils: the backbone of rural and regional communities

Victoria’s 48 rural and regional councils make a vital contribution to the prosperity and wellbeing of Victoria. In addition to being responsible for managing the urban growth of their cities and towns, they are social and economic development hubs.

The Government recognises the strategic leadership role that rural and regional councils play and through the Ministerial Statement on Local Government has adopted a strong reform agenda that will improve governance, accountability and capacity. These reforms are centred on the major review of the Local Government Act 1989 currently underway.

We will work cooperatively with local government to address the differences that can arise in service provision by utilising the Regional Partnerships to capitalise on local strengths and knowledge through the development of shared services and directly informing the Cabinet on region-wide priorities.

This approach for example underpins the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program currently being reviewed and delivered in partnership local councils. The review will ensure the program is effective in supporting local government’s capacity to manage emergencies.

Sport

Community sport is the heart and soul of regional Victoria. We know that healthy people make healthy communities which is why we encourage all Victorians to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

We’re doing this through programs to encourage greater participation in sport and recreational activities such as our Target One Million program which is setting the ambitious target of increasing recreational fishing participation in Victoria to over one million people by 2020, an increase of 25 per cent. Target One Million is already delivering great results across Victoria, with the creation of a bass fishery in Gippsland and Australia’s only trout cod fishery at Beechworth.

Investing in multi-purpose, accessible community sporting facilities creates opportunities for people of all ages to get involved and help their regional sporting clubs. We’re doing this through initiatives such as:

• $10 million for women’s change rooms and facilities.

• $10 million to upgrade local cricket clubs.

• Providing 1000 defibrillators to Victorian sporting clubs and facilities.

We’re also investing in upgrades of major regional sports stadiums to ensure that regional people can access top-quality sport and the best facilities. These include:

• $70 million to build a new grandstand at Geelong’s Simonds Stadium, improving facilities and increasing the ground’s capacity to 36,000.

• $31.5 million to upgrade Ballarat’s Eureka Stadium and sporting precinct and bring AFL games to Ballarat.

• $5 million towards the upgrade of Bendigo Stadium.
Aboriginal communities

The oldest continuous culture in human history deserves our recognition and support. That’s what true and fundamental respect for all Australians means.

At the same time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must have the right to determine their own future. No Government should dictate the shape and structure of their communities.

The Government is working with Traditional Owner groups to develop Settlement Agreements that recognise the rights of Traditional Owners. A comprehensive agreement has been signed with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. Further agreements are anticipated in the future.

Registered Aboriginal Parties are the local voice of Aboriginal people and play a vital part of Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

We provided $20.9 million in the 2015-16 State Budget to give Registered Aboriginal Parties the support they need to make important decisions about the management and protection of their cultural heritage.

There are currently RAP’s representing around 60 per cent of the state and the Government is committed to working with Indigenous communities and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council to expand the coverage.

We are also supporting the operation of eight regional Aboriginal Health committees each involving regional hospitals, mainstream services and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. These committees help steer local planning and the implementation of some $8.26 million in funded initiatives that over the next two years will identify and address the needs and priorities for Aboriginal people, families and communities in regional areas, complementing other statewide investments in Aboriginal Health and wellbeing.

As a part of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the Community Initiatives Program provides grants of up to $50,000 a year to Koori Community groups to design and implement projects that support research into reoffending and promote social and healthy activities.

Under the Frontline Youth Initiatives Program, grants of up to $110,000 a year, over a maximum of three years, are available for programs focussing on working with at-risk Koori youth from ages 10 to 24.

Multicultural communities

Victoria is home to one of the most successful and diverse multicultural societies in the world. We will always be at our best when we not only value our cultures, but embrace them, because that’s who we are.

The Refugee Action Program builds the capacity of refugee and asylum seeker communities to respond to priority settlement issues, and also supports service access through the provision of rights and responsibilities information. The Action Program is delivered in the operating in regional areas including Mildura, Greater Bendigo, Moira, Greater Shepparton, Geelong and Colac.

Through the Peak Multicultural Organisations Grants Program we are providing funding across Victoria with a particular focus on Regional Ethnic Communities’ Councils. The program assists local groups to help newly arrived refugees settle into our communities across the state.

The Government is also supporting regional cities to promote social cohesion with $40,000 to bring families and communities together in the City of Greater Bendigo and $30,000 towards the development of intercultural and interfaith connections in the City of Greater Shepparton.

Equality

The Government affirms the right to equality, fairness and decency for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, and intersex (LGBTI) Victorians and is committed to removing discrimination from Victorian laws, services and society.
We recognise that research consistently indicates that LGBTI people living in rural and regional Victoria are exposed to higher levels of homophobia than those in metropolitan areas. In addition, LGBTI people in rural areas can also be more isolated, with fewer social and support networks and greater difficulty in accessing services.

An LGBTI Taskforce has been established to work closely with Rowena Allen, Victoria’s first Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality, to develop a work plan and provide advice to the Minister for Equality to ensure that the Government’s equality initiatives are driven by genuine community consultation.

Commissioner Allen has a long history of advocacy for regional LGBTI Victorians and the Taskforce is supported by a Health and Human Services Working Group and a Justice Working Group both of which are co-chaired by a regional Member of Parliament.

The Government’s priorities include creating safe and supportive classrooms for same-sex attracted and gender diverse students and promoting acceptance of diversity, eliminating stigma and discrimination, and improving mental health, including tackling suicide in young LGBTI people.

**Women**

Under the Andrews Labor Government, no less than 50 per cent of all future appointments to paid Government boards and Victorian courts will be women. Ministers will be responsible for ensuring all appointments meet the new requirements, which apply to all paid government boards and the Supreme, County and Magistrates’ courts.

This commitment is already providing women in regional areas with greater opportunities to shape local decision making, create a deeper pool of talent on boards, and train more people from a broader range of experience to become community leaders.

**Veterans**

The Government will give regional veterans and their families the support, respect and commemoration they deserve.

Events to mark the 50th anniversary of Long Tan will include parades, a touring quilt exhibition, Vetride, regional grave vigils, a State Reception, and a $250,000 grant to the Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island so that the venue can protect the memories that are forever etched in our national story.

**Through Younger Eyes – The Impact of WWI on Geelong** initiative received a $30,000 grant, just one of many initiatives funded through the $175,000 Anzac Centenary Major Grants Program. In addition, 23 communities across Victoria will share in nearly $250,000 provided by the Government’s Restoring Community War Memorials and Avenues of Honour grants program.

We’ve also committed $400,000 to support RSL sub-branches implement veterans’ welfare projects, so veterans can live their lives after service with the dignity they deserve.

**WHAT’S NEXT**

We will use Council Strategic Resource Plans to improve State and local government investments and outcomes for local communities. This is especially critical in regional cities where we can co-locate related services and make assets work to full capacity. With this approach we will improve outcomes, protect liveability and stimulate local economies in regional Victoria.
The Barwon region is home to Victoria’s second largest city, Geelong, and includes unique landscapes such as the Great Ocean Road, the Otway forests, marine protected areas and rich inland agricultural districts.

Collaboration between the education and health sectors is demonstrated by Epworth HealthCare and Deakin University working in partnership to deliver Epworth Geelong: a state-of-the-art acute and rehabilitation private hospital for the region that will integrate healthcare with teaching and research. The region has a diverse economy, supported by interstate road and rail links Avalon Airport and the Port of Geelong. Geelong has a strong advanced manufacturing and processing sector with competitive strengths in biotechnology, ICT and carbon fibre.

### NEXT STEPS IN BARWON

With a population of over a quarter of a million people and growing, the Barwon region has identified priorities to address a number of environmental, demographic, social and economic challenges.

The Government will work with the region to meet these challenges and achieve its objectives, including:

- Tackling disadvantage in Corio and Norlane, two of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria;
- Refocusing the economy to accommodate growth through employment opportunities like the 150 new jobs at the DisabilityCare national headquarters and structural adjustment impacts in the region from closures such as the Point Henry smelter and the Ford manufacturing plant; and
- Supporting the important role advanced manufacturing will play in the local economy through cutting edge projects such as ManuFuture.
The Government has allocated funds for 21 new V/Locity carriages to carry more passengers on the V/Line network. There is also $115 million for new train stabling and maintenance in Waurn Ponds, which will create 30 ongoing jobs once completed.

A $7.8 million investment will provide for more police to be stationed in the growing areas of Bellarine and Geelong, and for longer opening hours at Drysdale, Portarlington and Queenscliff.

The Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party within the Barwon Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

The Government is partnering with schools and The Gordon Institute of TAFE to improve education, employment and skills outcomes through Skilling the Bay initiatives.

The Government is investing $3 million to refurbish and enhance the facilities of Moriac Primary School.

The $50 million Safer Country Crossing Program is boosting safety at 52 priority roads and level crossings including Phalps Road at Pirron Yallock near Colac.

Funding has been provided to increase the profile of the 2015–2018 Men’s and Women’s Victorian Open Golf Championship by increasing the prize money, gaining LGPA sanctioning and attracting international players.

The Anglesea Heath adjoins the Great Otway National Park and contains about a quarter of Victoria’s plant species and many nationally threatened and endangered species. The Government will incorporate the Anglesea Heath into the Great Otway National Park.

The Government is supporting initiatives such as the $7.5 million expansion to the Geelong Regional Innovation and Investment Fund and the establishment of the $5 million Defence Procurement Office.

The $13.5 million Portarlington Safe Harbour project will see the development of a precinct for boating, recreation and aquaculture.

As part of the Queenscliff Sport and Recreation Precinct Development, $3.15 million will go to completing stage 2 of the Monahan Centre, including the community gymnasium, spa and sauna.

G21 Region Opportunities for Work (GROW) is a plan to support people in the G21 region to find work. GROW links the region’s procurers and suppliers with employment and training to support jobseekers.

The $5 million Safer Country Crossing Program is boosting safety at 52 priority roads and level crossings including Phalps Road at Pirron Yallock near Colac.

Funding has been provided to increase the profile of the 2015–2018 Men’s and Women’s Victorian Open Golf Championship by increasing the prize money, gaining LGPA sanctioning and attracting international players.
The Central Highlands is home to more than 180,000 people.

The region is located on the east-west transport corridor connecting Melbourne, western Victoria and Adelaide. The region’s key strengths include its attractive rural landscapes, rich heritage in Aboriginal culture and goldmining history, and environmental features. The region’s major centre, Ballarat, is the fastest growing regional city in Victoria by population.

**NEXT STEPS IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS**

Central Highlands is seeking to build on strategic advantages such as proximity to Melbourne and high population growth in peri-urban areas like Bacchus Marsh, the diversity of its economy (including strengths in food processing, information technology, research and education), a rich agricultural base, outstanding natural and cultural tourism assets, and the quality of the region’s transport connections.

To support Central Highlands to achieve these objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Capturing opportunities in intensive animal and horticultural industries, the region has untapped potential with some of Victoria’s most productive soils;
- Addressing health challenges for a growing population. A master plan for the Ballarat Health Precinct will seek to encourage research, employment, investment and collaboration between Ballarat hospitals, education providers, medical service providers and related industries; and
- Towns and communities around Ballarat and along the Melbourne to Ballarat corridor, as well as towns in the Grampians National Park are exposed to the increased risk of bushfires.
REGIONAL PROJECTS

For other local projects please visit regions.vic.gov.au/centralhighlands

The Ballarat West Employment Zone has reached a significant milestone, securing Broadbent Grain as an anchor tenant. The construction of Broadbent Grain’s $24 million export grain-handling and storage facility is a major step in the development of the employment zone.

The Government is providing $5 million to redevelop Beaufort Secondary College and upgrade its facilities for students.

As part of the Government’s Stronger Country Bridges program, $1.75 million will be used to replace the Mortlake Ararat Road Bridge. The new bridge will be able to support heavier loads and trucks, increasing productivity, improving safety and helping to reduce supply chain costs.

$90 million will be spent on five new X’Trapolis trains to be built in Ballarat. This is strengthening the region’s manufacturing industries and creating jobs for regional Victorians.

Community groups are renewing their towns through initiatives such as the Clunes Booktown Festival. Held in the historic goldmining town of Clunes, the festival promotes the town, attracts visitors, contributes to the economy and strengthens community spirit. The Government has supported a delegation travelling to South Korea to develop future partnerships and exchange projects.

The Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc, the Dja Dja Wurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation and Martang Pty Ltd are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Central Highlands Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

The Government is turning Eureka Stadium into a world class venue. With more seating, improved lighting and scoreboard, the new stadium will soon host AFL Premiership matches.

The Government is investing $43 million in school facilities for the Central Highlands. This includes $5 million for the Bacchus Marsh Secondary College to construct a Year 9 centre.

The Victorian Government is investing $5 million to expand the planned new Bannockburn P-6 project to become a P-12 school. This funding will go towards the first stage of this project, to provide facilities for use in the early years of secondary school.

$8 million upgrades at Sovereign Hill will include a new sound and light show at the outdoor museum, a costume school, a 32-bed accommodation facility, a new ‘voyage to discovery’ exhibit and other new museum exhibits.
From beaches to snowfields and rainforests to alpine mountain landscapes, Gippsland has plenty to offer locals and visitors alike.

Gippsland’s growth has traditionally derived from its strengths in natural resources, energy, agriculture and forestry, manufacturing and tourism. The region produces around 90 per cent of Victoria’s electricity, 97 per cent of Victoria’s natural gas and 14 per cent of Australia’s oil. The region is experiencing economic and demographic changes which will present both opportunities and challenge.

**NEXT STEPS IN GIPPSLAND**

Gippsland is working to strengthen its resilience by developing a more diverse economy, supported by investment through better connections with global and national markets, innovation and improving on traditional strengths. Gippsland is looking to identify opportunities for environmental protection and enhancement that will improve liveability and provide opportunities for nature based tourism. Gippsland aims to accommodate growth by delivering infrastructure to meet community needs.

To support Gippsland in achieving its objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Improving social and economic opportunities while tackling high localised levels of unemployment - for example, Morwell has 12 per cent unemployment;
- Improving health in the Latrobe Valley, through place-based initiatives under the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan; and
- Identifying opportunities for environmental protection and enhancement that will support new and improve existing nature based tourism opportunities in the region - from further development at Phillip Island Nature Parks, to better linking of natural assets at Wilsons Promontory and the Gippsland Lakes.
The Broadening Horizons initiative partners Gippsland secondary schools with major regional employers to strengthen links between school, workplace and educational attainment.

The Government is providing $7.6 million to rebuild the Sale Specialist School.

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party within the Gippsland Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

West Gippsland Health Care will be one of a number of services across regional Victoria that will benefit from the $200 million Hospital Beds Rescue Fund, providing new hospital beds and points of care. The fund will help hospitals increase capacity, treat more patients sooner, reduce elective surgery waits and waiting times in emergency departments.

The Government is helping to refurbish Fish Creek Kindergarten to better accommodate the improved educator-to-child ratios from 1 January 2016 and to ensure Victorian children get more value out of the time they spend at kindergarten.

Bass Coast Regional Health will be one of a number of services across regional Victoria that will benefit from the $200 million Hospital Beds Rescue Fund, providing new hospital beds and points of care. The fund will help hospitals increase capacity, treat more patients sooner, reduce elective surgery waits and waiting times in emergency departments.

The Government is providing $2.5 million to Federation Training to establish an innovative student support and advice centre, and keep vital courses open to meet community needs.

The Victorian Government has invested $16 million in the Macalister Irrigation District project. The Government will use the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to invest $20 million into the next stage of the project.

The Government has invested $2.5 million in 2015-16 and is improving the management structure of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee to deliver an integrated program of practical, on-ground environmental works and community engagement to protect and improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes.

The Victorian Government is committing $1 million towards the new Latrobe Valley University Training Clinic and Dental Prosthetics Laboratory.

The Government is providing $2.5 million to Federation Training to establish an innovative student support and advice centre, and keep vital courses open to meet community needs.

The Victorian Government is investing $3 million to build a new Morwell Emergency Services Hub for better fire and ambulance services.
The Goulburn region extends from Melbourne’s northern growth corridor to the Murray River in the north. The Goulburn Valley is sometimes described as the ‘food bowl of Australia’.

Shepparton is the largest regional city and is a major service centre for central northern Victoria, offering a range of higher education options and extensive health services. With water resources, fertile soils, a mild climate, substantial native riverine woodlands and a central geographic location, the food and fibre sector underpins Goulburn’s region economy. The Shires of Murrindindi and Mitchell are located on the cusp of a growing Melbourne, perfect places for a weekend getaway or to settle down.

The Goulburn region is seeking to capitalise on its significant food industry capability. The GMW Connections project, Australia’s largest irrigation modernisation project, is a high priority of the region. Other priorities include protecting prime agricultural land and maintaining healthy communities and a thriving and dynamic economy.

To support the Goulburn region in achieving its growth objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges, including:

- Continuing to support the region (particularly the Murrindindi Shire) to recover from the significant economic, social and environmental damage from the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires;
- Managing structural adjustment impacts arising from industry changes, international competition, slowing economic growth and environmental change; and
- Improving education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Greater Shepparton area.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

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The Government is supporting the management of fruit fly through the implementation of the State and Regional Fruit Fly Action Plans to improve horticulture production and optimise trade opportunities. Regional Action Plans are being developed in key horticultural production areas including the Goulburn Valley.

The Victorian Government provides $280,000 each year to Greater Shepparton City Council to support arts and cultural facilities, including support for the Shepparton Art Museum to connect with the local Aboriginal community and provide a resident with professional curatorial programming skills.

The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Goulburn Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

Yarrawonga District Health Service will be one of a number of services across regional Victoria that will benefit from the $200 million Hospital Beds Rescue Fund, providing new hospital beds and points of care. The fund will help hospitals increase capacity, treat more patients sooner, reduce elective surgery waits and waiting times in emergency departments.

The Government has committed $1.5 million to redevelop Wallan town centre.

The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Goulburn Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

$5 million has been allocated to complete the Stage 4 upgrade of the Wallan Secondary College.

The Eurora Saleyards are being redeveloped through a $500,000 contribution from the Government.

Communities are recovering from the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires through long-term economic recovery projects such as the $28 million Vibe Hotel and Conference Centre, a bipartisan project in Marysville.
Great South Coast

GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (2014)

$5.2B

25% of Australia’s milk is produced in the Warrnambool region

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

Corangamite Shire
Glenelg Shire
Southern Grampians Shire
Moyne Shire
Warrnambool City

31% of adults volunteer

101,117

POPULATION

Extending from the Shipwreck Coast to the South Australian border, the Great South Coast is largely a rural region with a population of about 100,000. Warrnambool is the region’s largest centre with around 33,000 people.

The Great South Coast is home to internationally recognised areas of Indigenous significance, including Budj Bim, Tower Hill and Moyjil at Point Ritchie. The region has strong tourism, agricultural and fishing industries with considerable potential for future growth. There are opportunities for job creation in the renewable energy sector with the development of co-generation, wind power, natural gas, geothermal, wave and tidal energy.

NEXT STEPS IN GREAT SOUTH COAST

The key drivers of growth in the Great South Coast region are agriculture, tourism, retail trade and healthcare and social services.

To support the Great South Coast in achieving its growth objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges, including:

• Implementing the Shipwreck Coast Master plan to protect the coast, increase visitor numbers and contribute more to the local economy. Improved facilities will encourage visitors to stay longer and contribute more to the regional economy;
• Improving educational attainment outcomes, for example in Glenelg only 54 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds complete year 12 (compared to 79.8 per cent state-wide); and
• Strengthening communities, with almost 10 per cent of the population of the Great South Coast region is living in areas of disadvantage.
REGIONAL PROJECTS

For other local projects please visit regions.vic.gov.au/greatsouthcoast

As part of the Government’s Stronger Country Bridges program, $952,000 will be used to strengthen the Portland-Casterton road bridge. Strengthening bridges on key freight routes will support heavier loads and trucks, increase productivity, improve safety and help to reduce supply chain costs.

The Government has invested $4 million to rebuild the National Centre for Farmer Health in Hamilton, which helps improve the health, wellbeing and safety of farmers and farm workers.

The Government has committed $19 million to the 145km Grampians Peaks Trail, which will position the Grampians as one of Victoria’s key nature-based tourism destinations.

The $50 million Safer Country Crossings Program will boost safety at 52 priority roads and level crossings, including Sandys Lane at Gnotuk near Camperdown.

The $5 million is being spent to build a new home for the Warrnambool Special Development School. This funding will be for the first stage of the project, including the purchase of a site helping to ensure that children that need support are able to access education.

The Government is committing $15 million to establish Skills and Jobs Centres across Victoria. $1 million will go towards a new hub in the Old Courthouse Building as a first point-of-call for students looking to start training, workers needing to reskill, unemployed workers needing support for retraining and work placements and for employers.

As part of the $416 million Murray Basin Rail Project, the Port of Portland will gain direct access to the Murray Basin freight network for the first time. As a result the Port of Portland will share in up to an extra 500,000 tonnes of grain transported by rail per annum.

The Great South Coast is home to internationally recognised areas of indigenous significance, including Budj Bim, Tower Hill and Moyjil at Point Ritchie.

The Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Martang Pty Ltd are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Great South Coast Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

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LODDON CAMPASPE

The Loddon Campaspe Region stretches from the outskirts of Melbourne to the floodplains of the mid-Loddon River.

The region is home to the prosperous and vibrant regional city of Bendigo, one of the state’s largest and fastest growing regional cities. Castlemaine, Gisborne, Kyneton, Echuca and Maryborough are also important centres, offering high quality lifestyles, jobs and education. The region boasts a diverse and buoyant economy; however, there are also areas with socio-economic disadvantage.

NEXT STEPS IN LODDON CAMPASPE

The Loddon Campaspe region is seeking to maintain economic and social diversity while fostering its competitive advantages. Cultural diversity is an asset for the region with many migrant and refugee communities living in Bendigo and other towns in the area.

To support Loddon Campaspe to achieve these objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Improving productivity and job creation while continuing to support irrigation farmers through a period of immense change;
- Improving the appreciation of cultural diversity through initiatives such as the “Aspire Precinct” interfaith development - a learning, community and business hub for the Greater Bendigo community; and
- Improving health and education outcomes in Maryborough, which is one of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria.
Newstead will become Victoria’s first town to run on 100 per cent renewables with the help of $200,000 from the Victorian Government.

The Government is providing $65.6 million for the Echuca Hospital redevelopment. Echuca Regional Health is the sub-regional hub for acute, sub-acute and community mental health services and provides a vital service to the people of the Echuca/Moama catchment, as well as to many visitors each year.

The Government is providing $3.7 million to rebuild the Huntly CFA fire station.

The Government is investing $1 million for the development of the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park, a state-significant, world-class mountain bike facility on a former pine plantation.

The new $630 million Bendigo Hospital Project will be Victoria’s largest regional hospital, incorporating: 372 acute beds and 72 same day beds, 11 operating theatres, a new Integrated Cancer Centre, an integrated mental health unit and a helipad on top of a multi-storey carpark.

The Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc, the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Loddon Campaspe Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

Go Goldfields is an alliance of agencies working together to deliver community-driven approaches to improve health, education and social outcomes for children, teenagers and families in the Central Goldfields Shire.

As part of a $50 million program to build and upgrade kindergartens, the Government is investing across Bendigo – with improvements in Spring Gully, White Hills, Huntly, Axedale, North Bendigo and Kennington.

The Government is contributing $500,000 to improve the Wedderburn streetscape. The project will improve access and amenity for resident and visitors and create a safer, more attractive street environment for all people.
Bordering on the Murray River, the Mallee Region extends to the edge of the outback in far north-western Victoria.

Mildura is the region’s major regional city and largest urban centre. Mildura is located on major inland road and rail routes that cross states boundaries. The Mallee’s economy is driven by agriculture – both broadacre cropping and irrigated agriculture. The areas surrounding Mildura, Robinvale and Swan Hill are Victoria’s most productive horticultural areas. Its produce is showcased by the Mildura Jazz, Food and Wine Festival, which brings visitors from across the state. The region has a strong Indigenous heritage, a large Aboriginal population and a growing number of skilled migrants and people holding humanitarian visas.

Mallee is leading the way with innovative partnerships like FLO Connect, between Mildura Rural City Council and Red Cliffs Secondary College, which addresses the low level of youth engagement in education, training and employment. In three years, FLO Connect has resulted in 374 young people retained in education, training or employment, and 217 young people re-engaged in education.

The Mallee region aims to improve the wellbeing and economic participation of its people and protect and enhance the liveability and appeal of the region. The region also is seeking to grow through its advantages in agriculture, food processing and other regionally significant industries.

To support the Mallee to achieve these objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Issues which are particular challenges for rural communities like population retention, small town liveability and access to services;
- Improving productivity from irrigated agriculture through modernisation of Sunraysia’s irrigation infrastructure; and
- Addressing high rates of obesity, chronic disease and mental health problems in the area.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS**

- Buloke Shire
- Gannawarra Shire
- Mildura Rural City
- Swan Hill Rural City

**NEXT STEPS IN THE MALLEE**

The Mallee region aims to improve the wellbeing and economic participation of its people and protect and enhance the liveability and appeal of the region. The region also is seeking to grow through its advantages in agriculture, food processing and other regionally significant industries.

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- Addressing high rates of obesity, chronic disease and mental health problems in the area.

**GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (2014)**

- $3.9B

**POPULATION**

- 89,847

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS**

- Buloke Shire
- Gannawarra Shire
- Mildura Rural City
- Swan Hill Rural City

**$3.9B**

**16%**

16,381 students

16,381 students
The Government is investing $4.4 million to expand mental health treatment services in Mildura.

$200,000 has been allocated to Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services to boost its counselling services and housing assistance for women and children who have experienced family violence.

The Mallee region has a beautiful natural environment and a rich pioneering history. With towns embracing the Murray River, there is plenty for visitors to explore and many opportunities for the region to build on its tourism assets.

Kilter Rural (funded through Vic Super) is trialling new agricultural crops with a sustainability focus in the Swan Hill – Kerang area, including cotton, tomatoes and hemp.

The Government has supported SuniTAFE with $4 million to support the institute to rebuild and grow its operation and training delivery.

$200,000 has been allocated to Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services to boost its counselling services and housing assistance for women and children who have experienced family violence.

The Government is transforming disused railway stations in Donald, Wycheproof and Birchip into thriving community spaces through the $1.2 million Community Use of Vacant Rail Buildings Program.

The Government is progressing the $416 million Murray Basin Rail Project, which will fully standardise and upgrade the entire Murray Basin rail network. The Government has provided up to $220 million in the 2015-16 Victorian Budget for the project, with $5 million fast-tracked in February 2015 to get work started on critical maintenance and safety works.

The Baremgi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, and the Djaa Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Mallee Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

As part of the Government’s Stronger Country Bridges program, the Barham Bridge (on Kerang-Koondrook Road), one of the oldest bridges on the Murray River, will be strengthened to allow for greater freight loads. Strengthening bridges on key freight routes will support heavier loads and trucks, increase productivity, improve safety and help to reduce supply chain costs.

The Government is contributing $243,000 for the Quambatook North pipeline extension, part of the $589,000 Government contribution to connect farmers to the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline.

For other local projects please visit regions.vic.gov.au/mallee
Bordering New South Wales to the north and the Victorian Alps in the south and east, Wodonga and Wangaratta are the region’s two largest regional cities.

On the southern banks of the Murray River, Wodonga is the gateway between Victoria and New South Wales. Ovens Murray is strategically located on national freight transport routes and has a thriving tourism sector based on major attractions including the Alpine National Park, ski fields, Lake Hume, the Murray River and Lake Eildon.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS**

- Alpine Shire
- Benalla Rural City
- Indigo Shire
- Mansfield Shire
- Towong Shire
- Wodonga City
- Wangaratta Rural City

**GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (2014) $5.3B**

**POPULATION 120,296**

- 95% of children fully immunised at 24-27 months
- 14% of jobs are in Manufacturing

**NEXT STEPS IN OVENS MURRAY**

A triple-bottom-line approach to growth that encompasses economic, social and environmental initiatives is important to the region. Ovens Murray can build on competitive strengths such as Wodonga’s position as a transport and freight hub between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, ready access to water and regional tourism assets such as the alpine resorts, high quality food and wine production, heritage towns and iconic tracks and trails.

To support Ovens Murray in achieving its growth objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Improving economic development through employment clusters, workforce skills development, providing opportunities for adult learning, and attracting and retaining skilled workers;
- Attracting international visitors to the area’s natural attractions, particularly in the alpine and north east food and wine areas; and
- Supporting Central Business District revitalisation in regional cities to enhance liveability and improve their role as service centres.
REGIONAL PROJECTS

For other local projects please visit regions.vic.gov.au/ovensmurray

- **Wangaratta**
  - $500,000 is being provided to upgrade the Wangaratta saleyards. This will result in improvements to the safety, functionality and capacity of the facilities and reduce operating costs.

- **Benalla**
  - The Government provided $66,000 for the Benalla Racing Club to put on an AFL-themed race meeting featuring the Benalla Gold Cup on the inaugural Grand Final Friday. Victoria is the proud leader of Australian racing, generating more than $2.8 billion in economic activity.

- **Shire of Towong**
  - New mobile towers are being built in the Shire of Towong and regional municipalities across Victoria. 109 mobile towers will be built over three years to eliminate communications black spots and boost the state’s regional economy by an estimated $120 million per year.

- **Mansfield**
  - The Victorian Government is providing assistance with the implementation of process improvement initiatives for the Mansfield Shire Domestic Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) Action and Resource Plan.

- **Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation**
  - The Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party within the Ovens Murray Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

- **Wodonga**
  - SCT Logistics has invested in an intermodal freight terminal south of Wodonga, part of a $39 million commitment to increase rail freight along the Melbourne-Brisbane corridor.

- **Indigo**
  - With support from the National Trout Cod Recovery Plan, anglers can legally fish for trout cod in Beechworth. This delivers on the Government’s Target One Million plan for recreational fishing, which aims to get more Victorians fishing, more often.

- **High Country Rail Trail**
  - This draws cyclists attracted by the natural environment and who contribute strongly to the local economy.

- **Visit Victoria**
  - The Region will benefit from Visit Victoria, which will have a Regional Division, designed to work with Regional Tourism Boards and operators to grow tourism based on regional strengths, such as the Murray to the Mountains and High Country Rail Trail. This draws cyclists attracted by the natural environment and who contribute strongly to the local economy.

Communities across the region are tackling the issue of drug use through initiatives such as the Local Ice Steering Committee in Wangaratta and the Wangaratta Ice Action Plan.
Wimmera Southern Mallee extends from the Great Dividing Range to the South Australian border and north to the Mallee.

As one of the world’s great wheat and cereal growing regions, Wimmera Southern Mallee’s economy is led by agriculture, which generates $600 million each year for the local economy and directly supports over 5,000 jobs. The region includes notable natural features such as the stunning Grampians National Park, the Wimmera River, which includes major wetlands and lakes (Hindmarsh and Albacutya) and Mt Arapiles, a world renowned rock-climbing destination.

Wimmera Southern Mallee

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<tr>
<th>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh Shire</td>
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<td>Northern Grampians Shire</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Wimmera Shire</td>
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<td>Yarriambiack Shire</td>
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$2.4B GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT (2014)   18% of jobs are in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

48,261 POPULATION   35% volunteer

Next Steps in the Wimmera Southern Mallee

The region is seeking to develop a more diverse and innovative economy – including new agricultural products, tourism, research and education.

To support Wimmera Southern Mallee to achieve these objectives, the Government will work with the region to address a number of challenges it has identified, including:

- Building community resilience to drought and bushfire;
- Attracting new residents and addressing population decline and ageing, with Yarriambiack, West Wimmera and Hindmarsh’ population projected to decline between 14-16 per cent for the 2011-2031 period; and
- Lifting levels of broadband access, currently, just 59.5 per cent of the population has access to broadband, the lowest level of access of any region in the state.
Through the Stronger Country Bridges program to increase productivity, improve safety and help reduce supply chain costs, $1.4 million is going towards the strengthening of the Nhill-Jeparit road bridge.

Horsham’s Harness Track will be one of the first venues to benefit from the Government’s Victorian Racing Industry Fund, with a $225,818 investment to improve the welfare and safety of horses and drivers. Racing in the Wimmera alone generates $37 million for local businesses and close to 370 full-time jobs.

New mobile towers are being built in the Shire of Yarriambiack and regional municipalities across Victoria. 109 mobile towers will be built over three years to eliminate communications black spots and boost the state’s regional economy by an estimated $120 million per year.

Luv-a-Duck is a family owned duck-processing business based in Nhill. Its recent $28 million expansion will create 80 new jobs, reinforcing the company’s proud reputation for helping new migrants successfully settle into the local community.

The extension of Lake Wallace Walking Trail completed an all-abilities access trail around Lake Wallace. The project has had a lasting impact on strengthening the liveability of the Edenhope community. To this day the trail attracts locals, visitors, bird watchers, bikes, scooters, and people of all ages to enjoy the surrounds of Lake Wallace and Edenhope.

The Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation are the Registered Aboriginal Parties within the Wimmera Southern Mallee Region, supporting Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural preservation and heritage.

With the support of the Stawell Jobs Panel, $1.75 million is being provided to kick-start a particle physics laboratory at the Stawell Gold Mine. A kilometre below the ground, this state-of-the-art laboratory will conduct research on dark matter and neutrinos.

The Grains Innovation Park Horsham conducts research, development and extension programs for a wide range of crops including wheat, barley, canola, field peas, lentils and chick peas as well as associated agronomy, plant pathology and grains chemistry.