



Monday 27 May 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

REGIONAL PAYROLL TAX REDUCTION A WIN FOR REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Regional businesses will benefit from a further reduction in regional payroll tax, announced in the *2019-20 Victorian Budget*.

Regional Cities Victoria – which comprises the 10 largest regional cities in Victoria (Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, and Wodonga), home to more than 600,000 Victorians – says this initiative will make a significant difference to regional economies.

“Reducing regional payroll tax will encourage regional businesses to hire more staff, and will attract more businesses to operate in the regions,” Regional Cities Victoria Chair, Cr Margaret O’Rourke, said.

“This will make doing business in regional Victoria an even more attractive proposition.”

By 2022-23, regional payroll tax will be cut to 1.2125 per cent, a quarter of the metropolitan rate, and the lowest rate in the nation. This announcement follows a cut in regional payroll tax in last year’s Budget to 2.425 per cent. Businesses headquartered in metropolitan Melbourne which have staff working in regional locations will also be eligible for the lower rate.

Regional Cities Victoria also welcomes the \$2.6 billion *Delivering for Regional and Rural Victoria* package, which will fund a suite of transport, health, tourism and education programs and infrastructure projects.

“We need investment that will unlock the potential of the regions, ensure our regional cities are home to growing, connected economies, and are widely known as attractive places to live, work, and play,” Cr O’Rourke said.

“This package aligns with RCV’s focus on improving regional transport connectivity, growing regional tourism, and creating regional jobs.”

The package also includes funding for the Regional Partnership priorities, such as restoration of Her Majesty’s Theatre in Ballarat, and free public Wi-Fi in the Latrobe Valley and Ararat.

As expected, the focus of the *2019-20 Victorian Budget* was on delivering the Government’s commitments announced during the November 2018 election, including the Western Rail Plan, Geelong City Deal, and the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund.

“We saw some strong commitments for regional Victoria by the Government before the election, and we’re pleased to see these delivered in the Budget,” Cr O’Rourke, said.

RCV is a regional leadership group dedicated to building a sustainable Victoria by providing strategic advice, coordination and advocacy to State and Federal Governments to support policies which enable Victoria’s regional centres to grow and develop. Comprising Mayors and CEOs of the 10 largest cities in regional Victoria – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga – RCV is focused on achieving real change in regional Victoria through policy development and active implementation of those policies.



Cr O'Rourke also acknowledged the new *Victorian Jobs and Investment Fund*, which aims to support opportunities of state significance to create jobs and promote economic development.

"Attracting investment is a priority for all regional cities. We each have natural strengths that our local economies can build on, and we believe there are a range of opportunities in growth sectors such as waste management and agri-tech," Cr O'Rourke said.

"Regional economies continue to transition from traditional sectors, and we look forward to learning more about how regional cities can access this Fund."

Regional announcements in the 2019-20 Victorian Budget include:

- \$2.6 billion *Delivering for Regional and Rural Victoria* package
- \$486 million to upgrade country roads
- \$340 million for up to 18 new V/Locity trains for the Geelong and Ballarat lines
- \$152.4 million for regional court headquarters in Bendigo
- \$142.5 million boost to Victoria's biosecurity system
- \$136 million for an additional 500,000 regional specialist appointments over four years to reduce waiting times
- \$134 million for regional priorities identified through Regional Partnerships, including free public carparks in Ballarat, Morwell and Traralgon; restoration of Her Majesty's Theatre in Ballarat; and free public Wi-Fi in the Latrobe Valley and Ararat
- \$128 million for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre
- \$100 million for the Western Rail Plan
- \$100 million boost to the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund
- \$59.5 million for a new rehabilitation centre at Bendigo Hospital
- \$49.6 million for three new stations in and around Bendigo, at Goornong, Raywood and Huntly
- \$46.3 million for upgrades to regional TAFEs (The Gordon in Geelong, South West TAFE in Warrnambool, and GOTAFE in Seymour)
- \$32 million for building the visitor economy, and marketing campaigns to encourage tourism, particularly in regional Victoria
- \$19 million investment in regional public transport
- \$18.8 million in 2019-20 for Geelong City Deal
- \$7 million to plan for major development and expansion of the Latrobe Regional Hospital
- \$5 million Wine to World initiative, promoting Victorian wine to international markets
- \$2.4 million to plan for the redevelopment of Wangaratta Hospital
- \$1.5 million for the Great Ocean Road Action Plan

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