



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Regional Victoria moves one step closer to (COVID) normal**

**Tuesday 15 September 2020**

Regional Cities Victoria has welcomed the Victorian Government's announcement that regional Victoria will progress to the third step of the roadmap this Thursday (17 September 2020).

Regional Cities Victoria comprises the 10 largest regional cities in Victoria – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga. Collectively, these cities are home to more than 600,000 Victorians.

"Today's announcement is great news for regional Victoria. So many regional businesses and industries have been devastated by COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions, so it's great that we can start to reopen this week and our local economies and communities can start to recover," Chair of Regional Cities Victoria, Cr Margaret O'Rourke, said.

The Government's announcement comes after no new cases were reported in regional Victoria overnight, and there are just 43 active cases. The 14-day average (1 September to 14 September 2020) for new cases is just 3.6 in regional Victoria, and there have been no new cases with an unknown source in regional Victoria over the last 14 days.

"Regional Victoria is resilient and strong. The way we have responded to the pandemic and the challenges it has thrown at us is testament to this."

"We are slowly, but surely, making our way towards COVID Normal, and it's great that we're able to move to the third step of the roadmap earlier than forecast," Cr O'Rourke said.

Under the third step, there will no longer be any restrictions on the reasons to leave home, or the distance people can travel from their home. Up to 10 people will be allowed to meet outdoors, and households can have another nominated household visit their home.

Hospitality will resume, predominantly outdoor, with group limits of 10 and density limits. Retail businesses will reopen, including hairdressing and beauty salons where a face covering can be worn for the duration of the service, and childcare and early education will resume, and schools will return to onsite learning for all students in Term 4.

Intrastate travel will also be allowed, and tourist accommodation in regional Victoria will reopen.

"We really want to encourage people living in regional Victoria to visit other parts of regional Victoria from this Thursday."

"Of course, we continue to urge regional Victorians to maintain social distancing measures including wearing masks, 1.5m distance, and good hand hygiene to ensure we continue to defeat this virus," Cr O'Rourke said.

Regional Cities Victoria also welcomed the Government's announcements yesterday of funding for local Councils to implement swift and streamlined permit, enforcement and monitoring processes to support expanded outdoor dining.

"All of RCV's member cities will work hard to support local restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars to reopen safely, including through the proposed new outdoor dining initiatives."

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*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.*