



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **A State Budget that delivers for every part of Victoria**

**Friday 21 May 2021**

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) has welcomed the *2021/22 Victorian Budget*, which provides \$3.7 billion for regional initiatives.

RCV comprises the Mayors and CEOs of Victoria's ten largest cities outside Melbourne – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga. Collectively, these cities are home to more than 600,000 Victorians.

Chair of RCV and Mayor of Greater Shepparton City Council, Cr Kim O'Keefe, said the Government's \$3.8 billion investment in mental health will benefit the regions.

"We're pleased to see that the Budget addresses a challenge regional families have long faced – having to travel to access health and mental health care," Cr O'Keefe said.

"Mental health affects us all, both personally and our communities as a whole. No matter where you live, we should all be able to access the care and support and services we need. The funding provided in the Budget is a significant step to ensuring regional Victorians are able to do this."

Other initiatives and investments for regional Victoria in the *2021/22 Victorian Budget* include:

- \$986 million to build 25 brand new modern X'Trapolis 2.0 trains and supporting infrastructure in Ballarat, which will create hundreds of jobs
- \$148 million to establish the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, including seven regional academies in Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Moe and Shepparton
- \$20 million to be invested in the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, to ensure regional health services have the facilities they need to respond to the needs of local communities
- Funding to upgrade 17 regional schools
- \$141 million for five new Youth Prevention and Recovery Care Units, including across Barwon South-West, Gippsland, Grampians and Hume regions for young people
- \$129 million for regional development and agriculture investments
- \$17.4 million towards economic diversification in Portland and communities across Glenelg Shire
- Gippsland, West Gippsland, Hamilton, Horsham, Echuca, Swan Hill, and Wangaratta
- \$11 million to deliver a Regional and Rural Workforce Incentive to attract, train and recruit more mental health professionals to country communities
- \$10 million investment in the Morwell Food Manufacturing Precinct
- \$3 million in the Growing Regional Opportunities for Work (GROW) Program.

"It is critical that we continue to see government investment and policy initiatives to support sustainable growth in regional Victoria, and I'm pleased to see a number of programs designed to help regional Victoria recover from COVID-19," Cr O'Keefe said.

Around 4000 regional businesses will also benefit from a bring-forward of the full reduction to the regional employer payroll tax rate to 1.2125 per cent which will commence from 1 July 2021, one year earlier than previously planned.

"After an incredibly tough 18 months, this support for local businesses will support the regions to attract business investment."

In its submission to the 2021-22 Victorian Budget, RCV called for a range of investments to help the regions rebuild and recover from COVID-19, and to be growing, connected economies that are attractive places to live, work, and visit.

These included:

- Leveraging and maintaining regional liveability – Requiring continued investment in housing, digital connectivity, and streamlined planning processes; and
- Waste Management – Presenting opportunities for job creation and improved recycling and resource management outcomes across regional Victoria.

“We will continue to advocate on these issues, which we believe are critical for regional Victoria’s continued success. But, overall, we are pleased to see the focus on regional Victoria in this year’s Budget,” Cr O’Keefe said.

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