



MEDIA RELEASE

Funding for jobs and regional infrastructure axed in 2023-24 Victorian Budget

23 May 2023

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) has called on the Victorian Government to outline how regional Victorians will access State Government funding for infrastructure in growing communities and new job-creating projects following the discontinuation of the *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund* (RJIF).

Councils and regional businesses have had access to more than \$100m each year through this grants program since it was established by the Bracks Government more than two decades ago.

RCV spokesperson Cr Shane Sali said the RJIF has been used to create jobs, help business relocate to regional cities, build community centres, and make regional Victoria a better place to live, work and visit.

“It is incredibly disappointing that this funding has not been continued and there is no support available for local infrastructure projects in our growing regional cities. RCV is seeking an assurance from the Victorian Government that regional Councils will be able to access State Government funding via other means,” he said.

“Without access to Victorian Government funding, Councils will find it even harder to secure Federal Government funding, due to co-contribution requirements.”

RCV welcomed a series of 2023-24 Budget announcements, including:

- Significant investment in the regional rail network:
 - \$190 million towards capping regional rail fares at metro prices (which began on 31 March).
 - \$601 million to deliver 23 new Victorian-made VLocity trains.
 - \$111 million to support the regional rail network operations, reliability and punctuality.
 - \$3.5 million to maintain the Mode Shift Incentive Scheme, encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail.
- \$677 million in ongoing flood recovery
- And outdoor recreation initiatives such as:
 - \$32 million for the Go Fishing Victoria program
 - \$16 million for recreational boating infrastructure
 - \$2.5 million for the Country Football and Netball Program.

Cr Sali added that while RCV is looking forward to working with the Government to support planning legislative reform to increase housing supply, regional councils had hoped there would be support for enabling infrastructure in this budget.

“We would also like more information on plans to capitalise on 2026 Commonwealth Games for all regional areas in future budgets, not just the cities hosting the sports events.”

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.



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