



MEDIA RELEASE

RCV WELCOMES \$500m HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

Wednesday 27 March 2024

Chair of Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) Shane Sali welcomed this morning's announcement by the Albanese Government of the \$500 Housing Support Program to help local government make it quicker, easier and more affordable for people to build new homes in the regions.

RCV comprises the 10 largest regional cities in Victoria – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga.

“RCV welcomes the Commonwealth's efforts toward establishing new homes because councils need funds to address the immediate barriers to making this happen,” Cr Sali said.

Cr Sali said bolstering the planning workforce was a priority for RCV.

“Regional Victoria is experiencing extreme challenges due to a state-wide shortage of statutory planners and surveyors. It's causing delays in issuing building and planning permits for much-needed housing.”

Cr Sali said the second stream of the funding program would be integral to fast-tracking installation of key utilities and services such as water and sewage to not only unlock new housing stock in regional cities but help keep water costs down.

Cr Sali said while the Victorian Government's Housing Statement commits to providing quicker water connections by instructing water corporations to “*strengthen the need to engage with developers and local councils early and regularly through the permit process*”, it does not address the need to fund this new infrastructure. Currently these costs cannot be recovered through the state's Development Contribution Plans.

“More than 40 houses need to be built in regional Victoria every single day for the next 10 years to meet the Victorian Government's Housing Statement targets,” Cr Sali said.

“RCV understands the need to ensure further land supply is unlocked – local government is keen to play its role in this – but a lack of trunk infrastructure, particularly in greenfield ‘pioneer developments’ on the outskirts of regional cities, is holding back opportunity for more local industry and more affordable housing.

“Today's announcement from the Federal Government is a welcome start because we need to see more investment across regional Victoria that provides local government with the financial support necessary to ensure sustainable growth and development for our communities.

“This is especially important given the pace of growth in our regional cities, because asking councils to take on more debt cannot be the answer,” Cr Sali said.

“RCV is committed to strengthening our regional economies, encouraging sustainable growth, and maximising regional liveability. We want to help build a prosperous regional Victoria through investment in infrastructure and services that keep costs down and help regions grow,” Cr Sali said.

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