



CRITICAL WORKERS

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Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) has welcomed the Federal Government's \$300 weekly payment to support students on work placement when training for critical occupations – but said that support must include placements for Victoria's future town planners.

RCV is the peak body for regional Victoria, comprising of the 10 largest cities of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, and Wodonga. Collectively, these cities are home to more than 800,000 Victorians, and contribute to approximately 10 per cent of Victoria's economy.

RCV Chair, Cr Shane Sali acknowledged regional businesses were suffering from skills and labour shortages across a range of sectors, namely: hospitals and health services, aged care, early childhood education, food production, advanced manufacturing, and the hospitality sector (seasonal workforce).

However Cr Sali said regional Victoria was specifically experiencing extreme challenges due to a state-wide shortage of planning and engineering staff.

RCV's submission to the [Federal 2024-25 Budget](#) highlights the shortage of planners, noting that while all local governments are struggling to recruit and retain planners, regionally based councils faced additional barriers such as struggling to match the salaries offered in metropolitan roles or the private sector and the need to attract staff not only to the role, but to the region, when seeking to source staff from outside the area.

Demand for workers in regional areas is at an all-time high. The Victorian Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024 highlights that more than 75,000 new workers are expected in regional Victoria by 2026.

Attracting and retaining skilled workers is a key challenge for businesses and organisations in regional Victoria, exacerbated by a shortage of housing and accommodation options which is driving up the costs of living in regional Victoria.

Quotes to attribute to RCV Chair, Cr Shane Sali, Mayor of Greater Shepparton:

"Support for student placements for critical occupations must include planners – especially in regional Victoria.

"We just can't meet the expectations of government commitments, like the Housing Statement, if we don't have the professionals to do the work – such as planners, engineers, building surveyors and project managers.

"If we're going to tackle the housing crisis, and we're going to manage the growth of our regional areas, we really need the Federal Government to recognise planners as critical occupations and incentivise training for these jobs too."

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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.