



MEDIA RELEASE

RCV welcomes moves to address workforce shortages

26 August 2024

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) Chair Cr Shane Sali, Mayor of Shepparton, has welcomed the Victorian Government's moves to address [local government workforce shortages](#), but said there was still more that can be done.

Mr Sali said the present skills shortage is causing to delays in decisions around permitting and precinct planning, directly exacerbating housing shortages and contributing to unaffordability, and costing councils and ratepayers more in private consultants.

Mr Sali said RCV was keen to work with the consortium of higher education providers led by RMIT University on the two-year pilot, designed to fill skills shortages in areas like engineering, town planning and allied health. Training will commence in 2025, for more job pathways for local government workers wishing to retrain and new opportunities for jobseekers.

Cr Sali said RCV was deeply troubled about both low enrolment numbers for planners at universities and the potential consequences this would have housing supply and affordability.

"We support efforts under the National Housing Accord to streamline approvals for more homes, and key to this process is having a qualified and consistent planning workforce," Cr Sali said.

"Regional planning is not just about building houses. Planners also provide important work toward mitigation of the increasing risk of bushfires and floods, and consideration of native vegetation and heritage protection.

"Planning courses and degrees at local universities are critical to building a regional planning workforce that is not only invested in the future of our cities, but can deliver on the housing aspirations of federal and state governments and the demands of Victoria's growing population."

In recent submissions to Commonwealth and Victorian parliamentary inquiries and government engagement processes, RCV has called for:

- the Commonwealth to deem statutory planners as critical to the National Housing Accord and encourage more people to take up this occupation in the public sector;
- scholarships for those studying urban and regional planning;
- forgiveness of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for planning practitioners who live in regional Australia and work in local government;
- eligibility for the 'Commonwealth Prac Payment' for students undertaking mandatory placements whilst studying a course accredited by the Planning Institute of Australia; and
- inclusion of Urban and Regional Planner (ANZSCO 232611) in the Critical Skills Occupation List, to encourage skilled migrants to regional Australia.

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.



“The \$6.3m pilot program is a step in the right direction, but there are further measures that must be considered to sustain the workforce long term. Right now, we need a joint effort between universities, governments and industry bodies to facilitate promotion of these degrees – and the planning profession – to prospective students,” Cr Sali said.

“These courses are critical to building a planning workforce that can deliver on government housing aspirations and the demands of Victoria’s growing population.

“RCV is committed to continuing to work with the government to turn this skills shortage trend around.”

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 800,000 Victorians, and contribute to approximately 10 per cent of Victoria’s economy.

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