



MEDIA RELEASE

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100 days to go: Bring Parliament back to regional Victoria

With 100 days until the Victorian election, Regional Cities Victoria is calling on all political parties to commit to holding regional sittings of Parliament at least twice a year.

RCV Chair Cr Ben Blain said regional sittings of Parliament are more than a symbolic or costly gesture – they are an investment in regional communities and a demonstration that Victoria's regions matter to the people who govern them.

“Please don't tell regional Victorians that bringing Parliament to us twice a year is too expensive while asking us to help pay for a \$200 billion railway that will never come anywhere near us.”

Cr Blain said regional communities had seen too many commitments disappear while billions continued to flow into Melbourne.

“We were promised the Commonwealth Games. They disappeared. The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund was scrapped. Our roads have deteriorated while Melbourne has had its Big Build,” he said.

“That's why we're calling for a \$1 billion Regional Fund to create jobs, unlock more homes and invest in the infrastructure our growing cities need, and a \$2 billion Regional Roads Package to finally fix our broken roads.

“These are investments in the future of Victoria, but too often the decisions about our future are made without regional Victoria in the room.

“Government is very good at connecting things to regional Victoria – like transmission lines for renewables to power the state's future. It hasn't been nearly as good at staying connected to regional Victorians. Distance from Spring Street has too often meant distance from the decisions that shape our future.

“Regional Victorians are constantly coming to Parliament House to make our case. We travel to Melbourne, knock on doors, request meetings and compete for 15 minutes in diaries because decisions made in Spring Street have enormous consequences for our communities.”

The last time both Houses of Parliament sat in regional Victoria was in 2012, when the Legislative Assembly travelled to Ballarat and the Legislative Council sat in Bendigo.

“Regional sittings also support local accommodation, hospitality and businesses, open Parliament to regional students and residents, and give MPs from across Victoria an opportunity to experience the communities affected by their decisions.

“After years of regional communities being forced to go to Melbourne to be heard, it's time the Parliament of Victoria came back to listen.”



Background

The last regional sitting was the Legislative Council in Echuca on 18 April 2024, held in recognition of communities recovering from the 2022 floods. Before that, the Legislative Council sat in Bright in 2021 after the bushfires.

A regional sitting must originate as a motion from the House and the Governor must issue a proclamation to enable the house to meet outside Parliament House.

The last time both Houses of the Victorian Parliament sat in regional Victoria was 6 September 2012, when the Legislative Assembly sat in Ballarat and the Legislative Council in Bendigo.

Regional sittings originated under the Bracks Government in 2001.