RCV Secretariat
Level 4
12-20 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone +61 3 9654 4799

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 14 October 2026

Regional investment deserves budget transparency

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) has written to Premier Ben Carroll and Opposition Leader Jess Wilson calling for a dedicated Regional Budget Statement and the restoration of a regional economic development funding program in the first State Budget after November's election.

The alliance includes the Mayors and CEOs representing the cities of Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga, and is meeting today in Warrnambool.

Meeting in Warrnambool today, RCV Chair Cr Ben Blain said regional Victorians deserved a clear picture of how much State Government investment was coming their way.

"It's one thing to say there's investment in regional Victoria, it's another thing to actually prove it," Cr Blain said.

Victoria previously published a dedicated Rural and Regional Budget Information Paper, but it was discontinued from the 2023-24 Budget – the same year the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF) was scrapped.

The Parliamentary Budget Office found regional Victoria received just 12 per cent of asset investment in the 2025-26 Budget.

"We've had regional Budget reporting before. Let's bring it back and see the promised investment on the books, in black and white," Cr Blain said.

"This is about accountability. If governments say they're investing in regional Victoria, regional Victorians should be able to see it and measure it."

RCV acknowledged Labor's recent Royalties for the Regions announcement, which would reinvest mineral royalties into regional Victoria, and the Coalition's commitment to a 25 per cent Fair Share Guarantee for regional infrastructure spending. However, neither commitment establishes a dedicated, project-based funding program to support regional economic development, comparable to the former RJIF.

"Both major parties have recognised that regional Victoria needs greater investment, and that's a no-brainer. But we still don't have a commitment to a dedicated fund that gets important economic development projects off the ground," Cr Blain said.

RCV is calling on both parties to commit to a $1 billion Regional Growth Fund over four years to deliver the essential infrastructure needed to unlock housing, deliver growth infrastructure, attract private investment and create regional jobs.

Media: Emily Broadbent 0413 133 627

RCV Secretariat
Level 4
12-20 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone +61 3 9654 4799

"Before the first light is flicked or toilet flushed in a new home, millions of dollars need to be invested in the infrastructure that makes it possible," Cr Blain said.

"Victorians should be able to open the next State Budget and see what's being spent in regional Victoria, whether it matches the promises and whether we are really getting our fair share."

Media: Emily Broadbent 0413 133 627