



GETTING IT DONE VICTORIAN BUDGET 16/17

RURAL AND REGIONAL

Budget Information Paper



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Budget Paper No. 1 – Treasurer’s Speech
Budget Paper No. 2 – Strategy and Outlook
Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery
Budget Paper No. 4 – State Capital Program
Budget Paper No. 5 – Statement of Finances
(incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No. 3)

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**MORE TOURISTS,
MORE JOBS**

**REBUILDING
REGIONAL SCHOOLS**

**UPGRADING
REGIONAL HOSPITALS**

**SAFER COUNTRY
ROADS**

**BETTER REGIONAL
RAIL SERVICES**



OVERVIEW

Regional Victoria is the big winner in the *Victorian Budget 2016-17*. This Budget delivers the highest regional infrastructure investment on record.

With our investment, regional cities will start to rival Melbourne in the race for new jobs, businesses and residents.

They will become renowned centres for education, and arts and culture – drawing in visitors from across the country.

And they will be home to the industries of the future.

That's what this Budget is all about.

The Budget includes a \$325 million investment to create jobs in our regions and help workers gain a foothold in the fast-growing sectors that will define our economic future.

Education is another key to the economic future of regional Victoria.

That's why we're saving the TAFE system. That's why we're delivering the single biggest injection of funds to the education system in our state's history.

That's why, in growing communities across the state, 54 regional and rural schools will get upgrades, major improvements and funds for special projects.

With this Budget, regional health care will be more reliable and comfortable. We're investing \$200 million to upgrade hospital facilities, and another \$169 million to completely redevelop Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton.

It's the largest ever investment in regional health services outside of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo.

We're providing \$1.3 billion to improve regional rail services, the largest investment in regional public transport services in regional Victoria, and \$260 million to make country roads safer and more reliable.

Regional communities face their share of challenges. Ice addiction. Family violence. The road toll. We've listened to the experts – and we're taking action.

Last year, our Government got off to a strong start, investing \$500 million in regional jobs and infrastructure, supporting drought-affected communities.

We also set out our vision for the future of regional Victoria in the November 2015 Regional Statement. This Budget builds on that effort. Above all else, it's about concrete delivery.

Families in regional Victoria deserve safe roads, reliable transport, better schools and hospitals, and decent jobs in growing industries.

And we're getting it done.

Regional Partnerships

Nine new Regional Partnerships will change the way the Government works with regions.

Regional Partnerships bring together people from the public, private and community sectors to work on priorities that regional communities have identified.

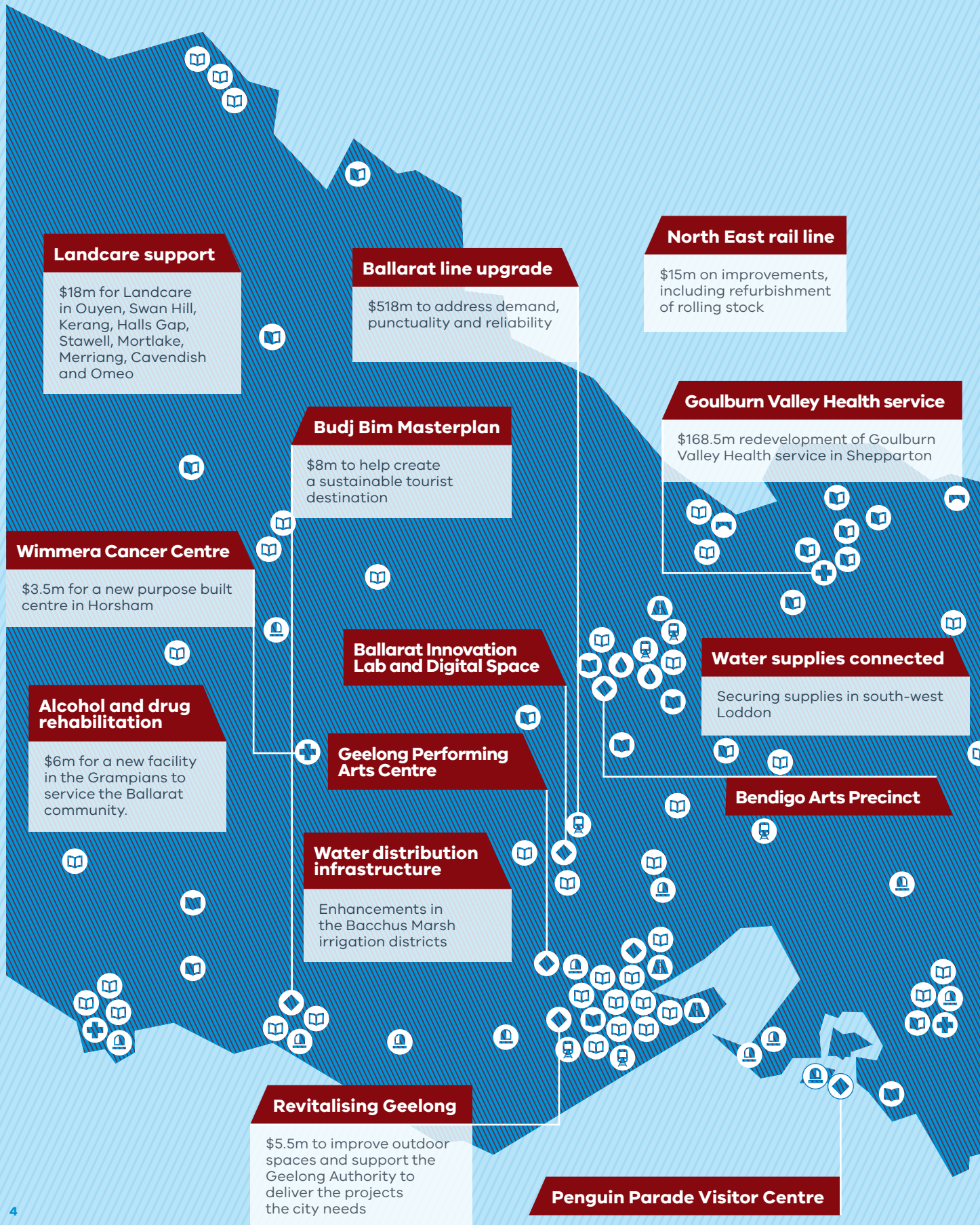
This is the model that regional communities asked for.












It's about the Government listening to what regional Victorians want, instead of telling locals what they think they need.

Regional Partnerships will give regional communities a direct stake in implementing the things that are most important to them.



MORE FOR OUR REGIONS



-  School Pride Fund allocation
-  School upgrade planning
-  School upgrades
-  Police station replacement
-  Police station upgrade
-  Health
-  Bridges
-  Roads
-  Rail
-  Major regional investment
-  Water

STATEWIDE

- \$572m for the family violence response
- \$427m for safer roads
- \$200m for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund
- \$45.4m for individual disability support packages for young people
- \$280m for more VLocity carriages
- \$198m for regional rail sustainability
- \$130m to replace road surfaces across Victoria
- \$131m for additional off-peak rail services
- \$51.6m for regional overtaking lanes
- \$200m to improve the health of Victoria's waterways
- \$169m to modernise Victoria's irrigation system
- \$80.7m to upgrade six emergency training centres and decommission the Fiskville training facility
- \$74m for forest fire management
- \$101m for the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund
- \$20m for the Regional Events Fund
- \$20.6m for biosecurity services to support agricultural industries
- \$8.5m to upgrade State-owned rail sidings at nine grain terminals
- \$5.1m for rural financial counselling services

Water supplies connected

Securing supplies for residents and businesses South Gippsland

Latrobe Valley

\$51.2m to implement the recommendations from the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry

\$40m to diversify the local economy, bringing in new industries and businesses

Water distribution infrastructure

Enhancements in the Macalister irrigation district

Tech Schools

\$92m for 10 new schools across Victoria including Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Gippsland

Gippsland rail corridor

\$9m on station upgrades

CREATING JOBS

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* will boost the number of jobs in growing industries and give Victorians the support and skills they need to fill them. Our investments will:

- Increase Victoria's trade and investment presence
- Streamline regulation and cut the cost of doing business
- Provide retrenched and unemployed people a pathway to ongoing employment
- Boost economic activity in cities and communities across regional Victoria

Our goal is for regional cities that do not have to rely on Melbourne for jobs and services. Their continued growth will be bolstered with the Budget allocating \$325 million for jobs in the regions. This includes:

- \$123 million for upgrades to regional irrigation infrastructure, connecting towns in South Gippsland, and protecting Bendigo's farming industries and the future of the tourist mine
- \$11 million to improve mobile coverage in regional Victoria by removing black spots in fire and flood prone areas, which will increase safety and support the regional economy
- \$5.5 million to revitalise Geelong improving outdoor spaces and streetscapes in central Geelong and supporting the work of the Geelong authority to deliver the projects the city needs
- \$4.2 million for the Ballarat Innovation Lab and Digital Space, which will bring new ICT jobs to Ballarat
- \$4.2 million for small business, including help for Victorian farmers to undertake financial mediation with creditors
- \$4 million to help Victorian businesses build their capabilities and make connection with Asian markets. This will position Victoria as a leader in Asian capability
- \$3 million to meet extra planning responsibilities associated with important developments in regional Victoria, including in central Geelong and the Moolap waterfront precinct
- \$2.2 million to assist regional councils to undertake important planning work and streamline planning processes

The Budget also invests a further \$116 million for our Investment Attraction and Assistance Program. This supports the growth of future industries across all of Victoria, encourages businesses to invest in disadvantaged areas and provides support for marketing Victoria industries.

The 50-year lease of the Port of Melbourne has also allowed for the creation of the \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund.



Strong regional cities

Our goal is our regional centres standing on their own two feet – cities that are home to new jobs in new industries.

The Government is seeking to drive growth in renewable energy and support the creation of jobs. That's why this Budget invests \$36.6 million for a range of measures, including \$12.4 million to assist with the transition from brown coal to renewable technology, helping to generate benefits for the Latrobe Valley and the State more broadly. The investment also includes \$24.2 million for the Victorian Energy Efficiency and Productivity Strategy to deliver improved energy efficiency outcomes and reduce energy price pressures on homes and businesses.

The Budget is also providing \$111 million for future industries and sector-strategic projects, to help drive investment across the State. This will support strategic projects that enable growth aligned with the Future Industries Sector Strategies. A number of these priority growth sectors, such as food and fibre and new energy technologies, will play a prominent role in ensuring our regional cities' economies continue to grow and generate local jobs.

Latrobe Valley

The Budget provides \$40 million to diversify the local economy in the Latrobe Valley, bringing in new industries and businesses, including a new Morwell Hi-Tech precinct. A further \$51.2 million is allocated to implement the findings of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry. This funding includes \$13.8 million to help with the transition of the land use of the Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang mine sites.



Tourism

The regional tourism and events industry already supports 110 000 jobs each year.

The Government is providing \$101 million for the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund to support more tourist landmarks, bring in new visitors and create new jobs. The first project to benefit from the Fund will be a new \$58.2 million Penguin Parade Visitor Centre, to be built at the Phillip Island Nature Parks. A new Eco-Centre will open up 8.2 hectares of prime penguin and wetland habitat, and provide modern facilities for visitors. This investment includes a \$10 million contribution from the Phillip Island Nature Parks.

Our \$20 million investment in a Regional Events Fund will support a strong and sustainable calendar of regional events to attract visitors from Melbourne and interstate to regional events. Regional tourism will also feature strongly in a major \$38 million promotion, selling Victoria to the nation and the world.

Creative industries

Regional Victoria already has a thriving arts and cultural tradition – and we can do more. The Budget includes:

- \$7 million for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre to progress the upgrades to expand and improve amenity
- \$7 million for the Bendigo Arts Precinct, to help the city become a true cultural hub

Coordination with the Regional Centre Culture program will ensure that creative organisations and regional communities can participate in a year-long program of arts and culture.



TRANSPORT

There is nothing more important than getting home safely, particularly in regional Victoria, where safe and reliable transport connects jobs, families and whole communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* includes a massive investment of \$1.6 billion to improve public transport and roads in regional and rural Victoria, with other investments having flow-on benefits to the regions.

The bulk of the \$427 million for road safety will be spent on regional roads. This will help prevent tragedy on our roads – helping regional Victorians return safely to their loved ones.

The Government is strengthening roads and bridges along key freight routes to improve efficiency. This includes new passing loops, and building the Murray Basin Rail Project to standardise and upgrade the Murray Basin rail network.

We will also establish the Victorian Transport Fund, a dedicated investment fund that uses the proceeds from the lease of the Port of Melbourne. At least 10 per cent of the proceeds of the lease will be put back into transport infrastructure projects in regional areas.

Regional rail

The Government will embark on a massive upgrade of the regional rail network, to give regional Victorians the reliable public transport they deserve.

The Budget invests \$1.3 billion to boost the capacity and efficiency of regional public transport and position the system for longer-term expansion.

A major \$518 million upgrade of the Ballarat rail line, will fix reliability issues along the line, which runs via Sunshine, Deer Park, Melton and Bacchus Marsh.

This investment includes building a second rail track between Deer Park West and Melton, additional train station platforms, pedestrian links, car parking and passing loops. These works will have flow-on benefits for the Geelong and Seymour regional train lines.

The Budget also allocates \$280 million for 27 new VLocity carriages supporting more services and helping to address overcrowding.

This includes \$131 million to increase passenger rail services for Ballarat, Geelong, Warrnambool, Bendigo, Traralgon and Shepparton to meet growth demands. A further \$198 million will ensure V/Line can continue to maintain regional rail service standards.

A further \$10 million will support development and planning for the Next Generation regional trains, enabling the existing older fleet to be retired progressively.

Other infrastructure upgrades include:

- \$15.8 million to upgrade the Bendigo and Eaglehawk stations
- \$15 million for improvements to the North East line, including refurbishment of rolling stock
- \$9 million for station upgrades on the Gippsland corridor, including works to fix problems with bus interchanges and car parking

A further \$23.6 million for a range of rail minor works will improve access, security and comfort at railway stations across Victoria.

We are also planning for future upgrades on a number of lines, including:

- \$2.6 million to plan for additional track capacity on the Gippsland line, including enhancements between Moe and Bairnsdale and the duplication of the Bunyip River Bridge
- \$5 million for development work for new tracks between Upfield and Somerton that can support new V/Line services to Wallan
- \$3 million to explore options for the Armstrong Creek growth corridor to improve public transport, including short-term investments in bus services and infrastructure
- \$2 million to increase capacity and counter-peak services on the Bendigo line.

All of these projects lay the groundwork for the future of regional transport, helping improve the reliability of services and supporting the growth of communities and businesses in regional Victoria.

To make services more reliable, an investment of \$141 million will address the backlog of major periodic maintenance works and prevent deterioration of the network. This will support train punctuality and improve the network's availability for freight.

Regional roads

Regional Victorians need safe, efficient roads. It's vital for strong regional communities, and essential for the productivity of the whole state. The Budget provides \$260 million to repair and upgrade unsafe and deteriorating roads across regional Victoria.

Regional and rural Victoria is the main target of the Budget's \$427 million investment to improve safety, and reduce death and serious injury on our roads.

This investment includes funding to make rural roads safer across Victoria, with the installation of safety infrastructure such as flexible barriers, and tactile edge and centre line treatments.

The \$107 million Drysdale Bypass will enhance safety and reduce peak traffic congestion on High Street.

The Budget also includes \$51.6 million to construct overtaking lanes on a number of major regional highways including Princes Highway East (between Orbost and the New South Wales border), Midland Highway (between Bannockburn and Meredith, and at Nillahcootie), the Great Alpine Road and Murray Valley Highway (between Cobram and Yarrawonga). The overtaking lanes will improve safety, travel times and reliability.

Major highways are often the focus of regional road investment. However, the Budget also allocates \$52 million for a package of works for regional roads that locals use every day. This investment includes:

- \$24 million for small-scale local road improvements to make sure community safety and amenity does not fall through the cracks
- \$15 million for planning future regional road works in Barwon Heads, Phillip Island, Wodonga, Shepparton, Geelong and Castlemaine
- \$13 million for the continuation of pre-construction works on the Western Highway (between Ararat and Stawell) and Princes Highway East (between Traralgon and Sale)

The Budget also includes \$30.4 million for improvements to the Midland Highway in Bendigo. These works will duplicate Napier Street between Weeroona Avenue and Scott Street, and between Scott Street and Hall Street, in Bendigo, improving safety and reducing congestion.

A further \$4 million will go towards planning an extension of the Geelong Ring Road to the Bellarine Peninsula.

Work will start on the replacement of two Murray River bridges to improve local communities and Victoria's freight transportation. Funding of \$2.2 million will complete planning and development for a replacement bridge at Tooleybuc and \$600 000 is allocated for further planning to replace the Yarrawonga-Mulwala Bridge.

A further \$8.7 million investment to improve and maintain smaller roads includes:

- A study of options to upgrade the intersection of Barry Street and Melbourne-Lancefield Road in Romsey
- Safety improvements to the cross intersection at Strathfieldsaye Road and Tannery Lane, Strathfieldsaye
- A pedestrian safety upgrade outside Koroit Primary School

An investment of \$130 million for maintenance and road restoration will replace road surfaces in Melbourne's outer suburbs and in regional Victoria





EDUCATION

The Government is making Victoria the Education State. That's why we're delivering the single biggest injection of funds to the education system in our state's history.

Every Victorian should be able to access quality education and training, regardless of their background, personal circumstances or where they live.

This will also build on our economic strengths and help us adapt to a rapidly changing global economy.

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* invests more in regional schools, with 54 rural and regional schools receiving upgrades, major improvements, or funds for special projects that build school and community pride.

The focus is on improving those rural and regional secondary schools that are in the worst condition and have missed out on upgrades over recent years.

The Government is allocating \$151 million for modernising, upgrading, and regenerating the following schools in regional and rural Victoria:

- Bacchus Marsh College
- Ballarat Secondary College (Wendouree Campus)
- Baringa Special School
- Bellarine Secondary College
- Belmont High School
- Benalla P-12 College
- Bendigo Senior Secondary College
- Brauer Secondary College
- Broadford Secondary College
- Casterton Secondary College
- Donald High School
- Drouin Secondary College
- Echuca Regeneration Project
- Grovedale College
- Irymple Secondary College
- Kalianna Special School
- Manifold Heights Primary School
- Mansfield Secondary College
- Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College
- Merbein P-10 College
- Morwell Park Primary School
- Mount Clear College
- Nelson Park School
- North Geelong Secondary College
- Oberon High School
- Ocean Grove Primary School
- Portland Bay School
- Portland Primary School
- Portland Secondary College
- Red Cliffs Secondary College
- Rochester Secondary College
- Rutherglen High School
- Warracknabeal Secondary College
- Warracknabeal Special School
- Warragul Regional College
- Warrnambool College
- Whittington Primary School
- Woodend Primary School
- Yarram Primary School

A large, diagonal photograph on the right side of the page. The top portion shows a young girl with brown hair, smiling, wearing a pink and purple dress and holding a paintbrush. The bottom portion shows a group of students in school uniforms playing basketball on an outdoor court. One student in a blue shirt is jumping to catch a yellow ball.

Every student deserves to be proud of their school. The Government has established a \$16 million School Pride and Sports Fund for Victorian schools. The following regional and rural schools will receive funds for special projects that build school and community pride:

- Chewton Primary School
- Congupna Primary School
- Ellinbank Primary School
- Harston Primary School
- Invergordon Primary School
- Macarthur Primary School
- Natimuk Primary School
- Rainbow P-12 College
- Robinvale College
- Tempy Primary School
- Timor Primary School
- Tooborac Primary School
- Undera Primary School
- Waaia Yalca South Primary School
- Zeerust Primary School

Land will be acquired in Armstrong Creek for a new school in the future. The following regional and rural schools have been provided funds to plan their future upgrades and building works as part of a \$12 million planning provision:

- Baimbridge College
- Beechworth Secondary College
- Marong Primary School
- Spring Gully Primary School
- The Alpine School for Leadership
- Wonthaggi Secondary College

Early years

Kindergartens are a critical part of children's learning and development, but the viability of a number of small kinders in rural Victoria is at risk. The Government is investing \$4.4 million to make sure they can keep their doors open.

There will also be more occasional care services for families with young children living in regional and rural areas. An additional \$3.8 million will provide additional support to occasional care services operating in Victoria and increase access to child care for children from birth to 5 years.

Maternal and child health services provide advice on many parenting, health and developmental issues. The Budget invests \$133 million to ensure children and their parents maintain free access to these services.

Training and skills

In just one year TAFEs have reported a substantial turnaround in their finances with help from the TAFE Rescue Fund. This assistance is helping students to get real jobs in regional Victoria.

It's about supporting students in rural and regional Victoria – helping them get the skills they need for the jobs they want.

The Rescue Fund is already providing urgent funding for campuses like Bendigo Kangan Institute, Federation Training, SuniTAFE, GoTAFE, the Gordon, South West TAFE and Wodonga TAFE.

The Budget allocates \$92 million for 10 new Tech Schools across Victoria, including in Gippsland, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong.

The Back to Work Scheme supports businesses that hire disadvantaged job seekers into new jobs. This Budget allocates \$20 million for the Reconnect program which will support young people and early school leavers to undertake foundation training. The program will provide participants with fee relief and Victorian Training Guarantee exemptions.

Workers will be trained for careers in environmentally sustainable plumbing trades including those who are retraining from manufacturing jobs through two Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centres. An allocation of \$5 million for this initiative includes a contribution to the fit out of the recently constructed centre in Geelong.



HEALTH

Regional health

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* invests \$2.9 billion in our health system across Victoria, so families in rural and regional areas have hospitals and services they can rely on.

This investment includes \$200 million for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, for projects that will make health services more reliable and comfortable for patients. These include:

- Funding towards the \$3.5 million new purpose built Wimmera Cancer Centre in Horsham to give local residents better access to cancer treatment close to home
- \$2.1 million to construct a new urgent-care facility at the Moyne Health Service in Port Fairy and refurbish existing buildings and bring them up to scratch
- \$1 million to start planning for the redevelopment of the West Gippsland Healthcare Group in Warragul

Health facilities in regional and rural public health services will be improved with access to a share of:

- \$35 million to replace outdated medical equipment
- \$25 million for new lifts, boilers and electrical upgrades
- \$10 million to replace and upgrade computer systems

The Budget invests \$169 million to redevelop the Goulburn Valley Health service in Shepparton to meet increased demand from a growing local population.

The project includes a new, four-storey tower, new theatres and wards, a refurbishment of the existing theatres, an expansion of the emergency department and an upgrade to the maternity ward.

Across the State, emergency departments, intensive care units, maternity admissions, mental health, palliative care and cancer services will receive a significant funding boost.

This Budget also allocates \$143 million to improve ambulance services across Victoria and ensure that paramedics have the resources they need. This will expand ambulance service availability, improve response times, as well as provide funding for vehicles and station upgrades.

Patients from regional and rural Victoria will also benefit from the establishment of the Leukaemia Foundation's Patient Accommodation Centre in Flemington.

The Centre will provide 15 one- and two-bedroom apartments for rural and regional patients undergoing treatment and their families.

Mental health

People with mental health issues – and their families and carers – deserve our full support.

An additional \$132 million for clinical mental health services will respond to growing patient demand across Victoria.

A major, \$57.3 million investment will provide more support for vulnerable children and their families. Projects include:

- Expanding specialist clinical child mental health services to help more than 1 000 children aged up to 12 years with significant behavioural problems
- Expanding the Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness program to an additional 10 mental health service areas, finally providing full statewide coverage
- Continuing assistance for homeless Victorians with a severe mental illness through Traralgon supported accommodation services, and funding additional housing workers

The Budget includes \$27.5 million for suicide prevention, including a trial of personal support services for survivors of suicide attempts at six sites across Victoria, and a further \$9.9 million will be dedicated to special mental health support for marginalised Victorians.

Ice

Access to alcohol and drug rehabilitation services in regional Victoria will be expanded with an allocation of \$6 million to develop an 18 to 20 bed facility in the Grampians region. It will service the Ballarat community.

The Budget provides \$5.5 million to train up to 9 700 health and human service workers who may have contact with people affected by ice. Professional development and support will also be provided for employers and workers.

\$4 million will support the continuation and expansion of the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice partnerships, which are trialling service models that involve Aboriginal organisations and mainstream drug treatment providers working together to improve access and supports for Aboriginal people who have ice or other substance concerns.

This additional funding builds on the \$45.5 million invested in the Ice Action Plan in 2015-16.



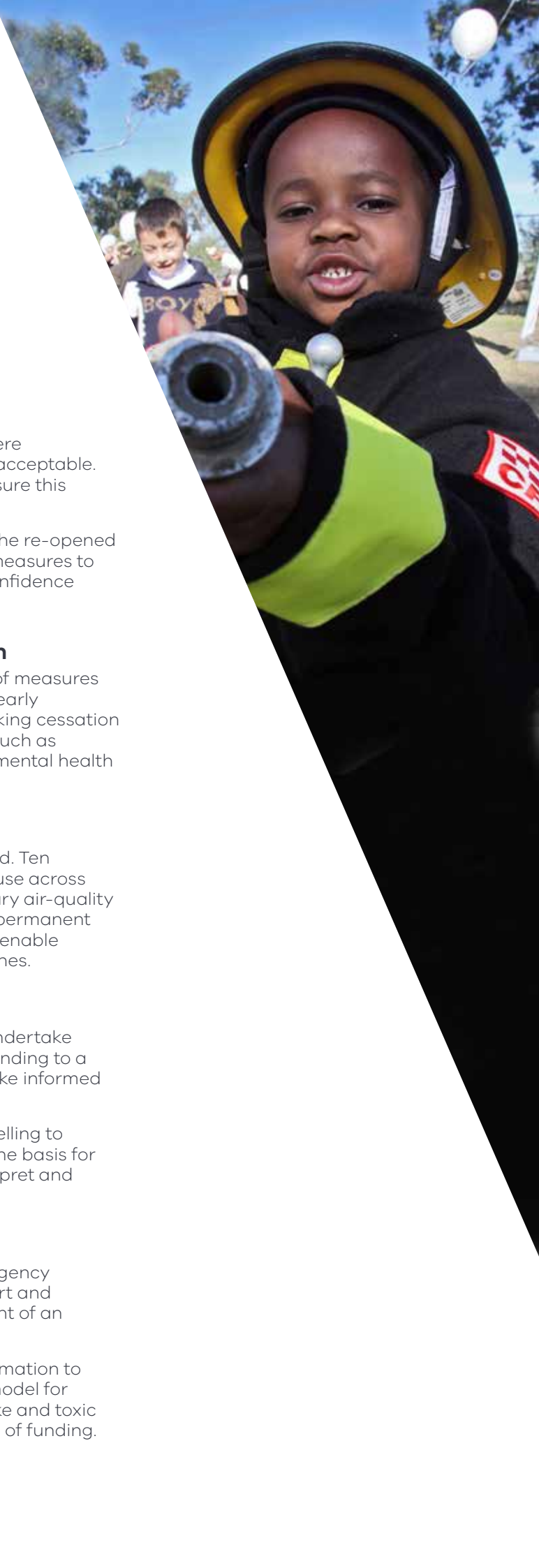
Disability

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the biggest social reform since Medicare. The Victorian Government is committed to the successful rollout of the scheme for people with disability and their families and carers.

In 2016-17, the Loddon Mallee and Central Highlands regions will transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The NDIS gives people with disability choice and control over the services they receive to best meet their needs.

In areas that are pending transition to the NDIS, the Government will provide \$45.4 million for individual support packages for up to 400 more young people with disability, their families and carers.





Hazelwood response

The harm to which the people of the Latrobe Valley were exposed from the Hazelwood mine fire in 2014 was unacceptable. We need to do all we can to support them, and make sure this doesn't happen again.

This Budget invests a total of \$51.2 million to address the re-opened Inquiry's recommendations and put in place further measures to protect the Valley and help the local economy gain confidence and strength.

Additional investment in residents' health

The Government is investing \$27.3 million for a range of measures including preventive health programs, screening and early intervention such as oral health assessment and smoking cessation programs. Funding will also support priority services such as Aboriginal support, respiratory nursing services, and mental health support and coordinated chronic disease.

Better environmental monitoring

Monitoring the quality of air and water will be improved. Ten portable smoke detection units will be purchased for use across Victoria. A further \$3.8 million will enable four temporary air-quality monitoring stations in the Latrobe Valley to be made permanent and also support the full rollout of a program that will enable residents to assess smoke danger via their smart phones.

Fire services

Additional funding will enable fire services to better undertake remote air-quality monitoring within 24 hours of responding to a hazardous event. This will allow first responders to make informed decisions regarding the safety of the event.

The Country Fire Authority will implement plume modelling to monitor toxic atmospheric releases. This will provide the basis for real-time modelling and enable officers to make, interpret and communicate forecasts.

Being prepared and informed

Being prepared for emergency events is critical. Emergency Management Victoria will be funded to provide support and guidance to the Latrobe Valley, during the development of an emergency management planning framework.

Communities, services and industry should have information to assess risks before and during emergency events. A model for predicting the impact of bushfire, flood, bushfire smoke and toxic atmospheric release will be developed with \$1.7 million of funding.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Family violence

Family violence is the number one law and order issue facing the Victorian community.

There are higher rates of family violence reports in regional areas. In 2013-14, the 10 local government areas with the highest rates of family violence incident reports were outside metropolitan Melbourne.

In regional and rural Victoria, geographic and social isolation and limited access to specialist services make it even harder for victims to get help.

Preventing and responding to family violence is difficult and demanding. There is no simple solution. We need to change attitudes and behaviours.

The Andrews Labor Government is rebuilding Victoria's family violence system from the ground up. The Government will implement all 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* commits \$572 million over three years as an initial response to the report. The funding will be used to:

- Prevent family violence
- Improve early intervention to identify and protect those at risk
- Support victims
- Make sure all communities have access to support
- Protect vulnerable children
- Make perpetrators accountable
- Improve the way that Government and society work together

Over the next six months, the Government will work with victims, survivors and organisations to improve the family violence support system, with a particular focus on regional and rural Victoria.

Police and emergency services

Country police officers are a vital part of the rural and regional communities they serve. The Government is investing \$596 million in additional police, equipment, technology and specialist services across the whole Victorian police force, helping country police make regional and rural communities safer.

This package includes 406 additional sworn police officers and 52 additional specialist staff across Victoria. We are also funding two new forensic hubs in regional Victoria to help police with their investigations into ice and other drug trafficking.

Work will commence to replace and upgrade worn-down police facilities in regional and rural Victoria, with a \$36.8 million investment. Stations will be replaced in Bright, Colac, Corryong, Cowes, Mallacoota, Murtoa and Warburton. Police stations will be refurbished at Bacchus Marsh, Bairnsdale, Benalla, Churchill, Cobden, Geelong, Lakes Entrance, Maffra, Moe, Mount Buller, Portland, Rosebud, Sorrento, Warragul and Warrnambool, and 10 police residences across Victoria will be replaced or refurbished.

Fire protection

Regional emergency services need to have the best training to deal with the threat of fire and other emergencies.

In this Budget, initiatives include:

- \$80.7 million to upgrade facilities at six emergency training services, and decommission and remediate the Fiskville Training College site
- \$46.2 million for new training facilities in the Central Highlands and upgrades at Huntly Victorian Emergency Management Training College, following the closure of the Fiskville Training College. This will ensure high-quality training facilities are available to the State's volunteer and career firefighters
- \$37.1 million to continue and expand the Emergency Medical Response program to 35 integrated Country Fire Authority brigades. Response times to critical incidents will be improved by enabling firefighters to be dispatched to incidents at the same time as paramedics

The Government is strengthening forest fire management and firefighting with a \$74 million investment in additional aviation capability, extra standby staff, more heavy plant equipment, and training.

The radio network used by forest firefighters will also be upgraded to a digital network to improve safety and enable the various systems within the network to better work together.





STRENGTHENING OUR NATURAL ASSETS

Regional Victorian communities and economies rely on a healthy, sustainable environment to create jobs, grow businesses, attract visitors and maintain a decent quality of life.

Water

Effective management and supply of our precious water resources is critical. The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* invests over \$460 million to protect and expand the State's water resources.

The environmental health of waterways in regional Victoria will be improved with an allocation of \$200 million, and Victoria's irrigation system will be modernised with an investment of \$169 million.

By securing the water supply to key irrigation and farming areas, the Government will ensure that the Victorian agricultural sector remains competitive.

Enhancements to water distribution infrastructure in the Macalister, and Bacchus Marsh, and Werribee irrigation districts will reduce the amount of water wastage and increase producers' productivity.

The water supplies of south-west Loddon and the northern towns of South Gippsland (Nyora, Loch, Korumburra and Poowong) will be secured for both residents and industries.

Additional measures that sustain regional Victoria's water resources include:

- \$22 million to support Catchment Management Authorities to develop integrated catchment management strategies
- \$14.1 million to manage the immediate risks of rising groundwater in Bendigo and develop a long-term solution
- \$12.8 million to improve surface and groundwater monitoring, update modelling of the State's major water supply systems and improve community access to water information
- \$5.8 million towards enhancing the efficiency of the water grid, for more productive regional industries
- \$8.8 million to help Victorian cities and towns implement efficient water management practices and \$1.3 million to improve the use of Victoria's waterways for recreation
- \$4.7 million to develop a statewide approach to incorporate Aboriginal values and expertise into water management – because they know the land better than anyone
- \$4.3 million to improve Victoria's preparedness and response to climate change and the impact of drought

Agriculture

In 2015 the Government established a new \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to drive economic growth, create jobs, boost exports and support Victorian farmers from paddock to port.

An early allocation from the Fund of \$8.5 million will be made for a co-investment for upgrades of State-owned rail siding assets at nine Victorian grain terminals.

Other initiatives to strengthen Victoria's regional agriculture sector include:

- \$20.6 million to support the State's agricultural industries by maintaining Victoria's biosecurity services, including measures to better respond to serious livestock disease risks
- \$7.7 million to modernise the regulation of Victoria's earth resources
- \$6.2 million to continue the Fox and Wild Dog Management program, which helps to manage the risks to primary production, biodiversity and community health posed by foxes and wild dogs
- \$5.1 million to continue rural financial counselling services which help rural businesses suffering financial hardship
- \$5 million to guarantee Victoria's food export future, upgrading equipment and technology to improve detection, diagnosis and analysis of biosecurity hazards



Environment

The Government is taking a responsible approach to preparing Victoria for the impacts of climate change – one that supports a sustainable economy and encourages new jobs across the State. The Budget includes:

- \$15 million for the replacement of critical coastal protection assets to increase resilience against storms, flooding and erosion
- \$4 million to monitor coastal flooding, erosion and land stability in order to better prepare for emergencies and reduce potential economic losses following a climate change event
- \$600 000 to undertake modelling and feasibility studies of the impacts of climate change on the health and the human services system

The Government will ensure the value of all of our national parks is maintained so that they can be enjoyed by more Victorians and visitors.

The Budget invests \$20 million for critical works to revitalise or replace park infrastructure, to make them more accessible and enjoyable for all.

Biodiversity

A healthy biodiversity is a precious public asset, and is also critical for Victoria’s primary industries. It underpins tourism, which is an important economic driver for regional Victoria, contributing \$11 billion to the economy.

However, Victoria’s biodiversity has been declining and we need to take action. A significant number of flora and fauna species in Victoria are considered endangered. The Government is pursuing a comprehensive set of targeted initiatives, including:

- \$29 million for projects to protect threatened species, improve habitat and reduce threats to biodiversity
- \$18 million to increase support for Landcare, including the number and coverage of Landcare support in Ouyen, Edenhope, Halls Gap, Cavendish, Mortlake, Stawell, Omeo, Merriang, Swan Hill and Kerang
- \$3.1 million to increase the area of private land able to be protected and rehabilitated by Trust for Nature covenants
- \$400 000 to purchase 40 hectares of land to help preserve habitat for the Helmeted Honeyeater, Victoria’s bird emblem





A BETTER SOCIETY

Sport and recreation

The *Victorian Budget 2016-17* invests \$46.4 million in community sports and events across Victoria.

This includes \$8 million to support country football and netball clubs to develop essential facilities through rural, regional and outer-metropolitan councils. Other initiatives in the Budget include:

- \$14 million for the establishment of the Kardinia Park Stadium Trust to oversee the development and use of Simonds Stadium and car parks located within Kardinia Park
- \$5.3 million for development of a Sustainable Hunting Action Plan to promote responsible hunting and improve hunting opportunities within Victoria
- Life Saving Victoria clubhouses in Anglesea, Portsea and Cape Paterson will be redeveloped to improve facilities and amenities used by volunteers and the community

The Government is also supporting recreational fishers in Port Phillip and Corio Bays through a \$27 million buy-back of commercial netting licenses. A further \$10.8 million will deliver new programs to increase fish stocks, improve education and children's fishing programs and grow the Victorian Trout Opening Festival.

A strong Aboriginal culture

The Government supports Victorian Aboriginal peoples' self-determination, and their full economic and social participation. The Budget includes:

- \$8 million to assist the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners progress the Budj Bim UNESCO World Heritage listing, to help create a unique and sustainable tourist destination for the south-west region of Victoria
- \$6.6 million for the Koori Business Strategy to support Aboriginal business skills and experience
- \$3.8 million for direct engagement with the Aboriginal community on the development of a self-determination agenda
- \$1 million to further enhance the importance of Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage by improving its management and protection

Equality

The Government is committed to equality. The Budget provides \$2.5 million for a program of education and training to combat homophobia and transphobia across Victoria, and help members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities access more support outside metropolitan centres.



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