The Hon Daniel Andrews MP

Premier of Victoria

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP

Minister for Regional Development

Monday, 27 May 2019

# KEEPING OUR PROMISES AND DELIVERING FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA

We took a positive plan to the people of Victoria. With this year's Budget, we're delivering on that plan and keeping our promises.

The *Victorian Budget 2019/20* establishes the brand-new $2.6 billion Delivering for Regional and Rural Victoria Program, ensuring that every community and every corner of our state shares in Victoria’s success, while also creating an estimated 4,500 jobs.

This year’s Budget also makes sure our kids are ready for school and set for life, with $882 million to begin the rollout of universal three-year-old kinder, starting in regional Victoria first.

Three-year-old kinder will be rolled out to six rural and regional local government areas next year, including Buloke, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, South Gippsland, Strathbogie and Yarriambiack, with an extra 15 regional communities coming on board in 2021.

This commitment will ensure every three-year-old has access to at least five hours per week of subsidised kinder by 2022 – increasing to 15 hours per week over the next decade.

Not only will the Labor Government’s three-year-old kinder fundamentally transform early childhood education, it will also help families struggling with the cost of living, saving parents up to $5,000 a year.

Led by qualified kindergarten teachers, this reform will nearly double the size of the kindergarten sector once fully rolled out. It’s why, in order to meet this demand, this year’s Budget includes $28.5 million to add early childhood courses to the Free TAFE list, while investing a total of $316 million in new kinder facilities.

Our investments in health are also creating thousands of new jobs, with this year’s Budget dedicating $160 million to ensuring Victorians have quality care, wherever they live.

That includes investing $136 million to deliver an extra 500,000 appointments with medical specialists in regional Victoria, ensuring patients can spend less time travelling and more time with their loved ones.

An additional $59.5 million will deliver a new rehab centre at Bendigo Hospital, bringing together vital services including prosthetics, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, as well as a $100 million boost to our landmark Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which has already delivered 283 local projects across our state.

Building on the $10 million already invested to kickstart planning, a further $100 million will fund the Geelong Women’s and Children’s Hospital, giving local families world-class maternity and paediatric services closer to home, while an additional $9.4 million will begin work on Latrobe Regional Hospital and Wangaratta Hospital.

Right now, our $1.7 billion Regional Rail Revival is delivering upgrades to every regional passenger line in the state. But we know there’s more to do – that’s why this year’s Budget delivers $615 million for regional public transport, including $340 million for up to 18 new VLocity trains, replacing older trains on some of our busiest regional lines.

A further $49.6 million will see three new stations in and around Bendigo, located at Goornong, Raywood and Huntly, with additional funding to plan for a track upgrade between Kyneton and Bendigo to enable trains every 40 minutes during off-peak times and the re-establishment of a station at Harcourt.

And as we continue the biggest transformation of our state’s road and rail, we’re also turning our attention to the next set of big projects, investing $100 million to begin work on the Western Rail Plan, the first step in delivering genuine fast rail to the growing cities of Geelong and Ballarat.

We promised to continue upgrading regional roads. This year’s Budget delivers on that promise, investing $804 million across our regional road network, with $425 million to fix the local roads that drivers use every day.

A $60.8 million Budget boost will Keep Ballarat Moving, with a dedicated package to upgrade the city’s key intersections, reducing bottlenecks and improving safety for locals.

A further $134 million will go towards regional priorities, including building 2,000 free public carparks in Ballarat, Traralgon and Morwell, free public wi-fi for Ararat and the Latrobe Valley, and delivering the Benalla Splash Park.

Students across the state will have a brighter smile, thanks to our investment in free dental care at all Victorian government schools. This year’s Budget begins that rollout, with $322 million in dedicated funding.

This Budget will also ensure new mums and dads get the advice and assistance they need, with three new regional parenting centres located in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, alongside extra sleep and settling support and brand-new baby bundles for first-time parents.

We’re also putting power back in the hands of Victorians, with this year’s Budget delivering on the Labor Government’s positive plan, investing $1.3 billion to install solar at 770,000 homes over the next decade.

The Budget continues the Labor Government’s record investment in the Education State, with $149 million to build, plan and upgrade schools across regional Victoria.

With Free TAFE a roaring success – boasting a 116 per cent bump in regional enrolments – we’re continuing to rebuild our regional TAFE campuses, with $46.3 million to upgrade The Gordon in Geelong, South West TAFE’s Warrnambool facilities and GOTAFE in Seymour.

And in good news for local businesses and local jobs, the Labor Government is further reducing regional payroll tax. In last year’s Budget we cut payroll tax for regional business to 2.425 per cent. Now we're providing further tax relief, reducing regional payroll tax to a quarter of the metro rate – down to 1.2125 per cent by 2022-23.

The Budget also invests $142.5 million to boost Victoria’s biosecurity system – the largest investment of its type in the history of our state. This will help protect our farming communities, while retaining Victoria’s world-renowned clean, green reputation and support local jobs.

These are the things we said we would do. And with this Budget, we’re keeping our promises and delivering for all Victorians.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

*“This Budget delivers on every single one of the commitments we made to the people of Victoria. Because when we make a promise, we keep it.”*

*“We’re delivering on our positive plan, with solar panels on roofs, healthy smiles on our kids and we’re prioritising regional families as we start to rollout of three-year-old kinder for every Victorian child.”*

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

*“In every community and every corner of our state, we’re delivering on our promises and delivering for regional Victorians.”*

*“We’re making the investments needed to help regional and rural Victoria continue to thrive and putting local people and local priorities at the heart of our Government’s agenda.”*