The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources

Monday, 27 May 2019

# STRONGER COMMUNITIES, SAFER FARMS AND REGIONAL JOBS

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering on its commitments to the regions, with a massive biosecurity boost for Victorian farmers, and supporting the infrastructure and jobs to ensure regional and rural Victoria continues to be a great place to live, work and invest.

The *Victorian Budget 2019/20* includes a landmark $2.6 billion *Delivering for Regional and Rural Victoria* *Program,* which will bolster regional tourism, underpin key industries, and provide the infrastructure and services that local communities rely on.

The program includes transformative projects for regional and rural Victoria, such as $152.4 million to build a new regional court headquarters in Bendigo, $128 million for the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, and $46.3 million to upgrade regional TAFEs, so all Victorians can access the qualifications they need, close to home and work – just as we promised.

It will also improve country roads and build better tourism infrastructure, providing critical health facility upgrades for regional and rural Victoria – creating local jobs and supporting local businesses.

Agriculture is the backbone of our rural and regional communities - that’s why the Budgetalso delivers an unprecedented investment to keep Victoria’s agriculture industry safe, innovative and internationally competitive.

Pests or bugs can do untold damage to our agriculture sector and destroy livelihoods. That’s why the Labor Government is providing $142.5 million to boost Victoria’s biosecurity system – the largest investment of its type in the history of our state.

The investment will ensure the agriculture sector is prepared to respond to and manage growing biosecurity risks while protecting our farming communities – helping retain Victoria’s world-renowned clean, green reputation and support local jobs.

We also promised to support the next generation of farming jobs. And with the Budget, we’re investing $7.2 million to ensure young Victorians have the skills they need for lifelong careers in the agricultural industry.

This includes the delivery of the Certificate III in Shearing from 2020 – the biggest boost to shearing in a generation – as well as upgrades to our agricultural colleges at Longerenong, Dookie and Glenormiston, and continuing our young farmer scholarships.

The Budget continues the Government’s record investments in regional Victoria, with $131.8 million to ensure our rural towns and regional cities continue to thrive.

This funding will go to for a range of priority projects in regional Victoria including free carparks in Ballarat and the Latrobe Valley, free public wifi in Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Ararat, the Barwon Heads Community Hub and Benalla Splash Park.

With an average of eight tonnes of stone, gravel and sand per Victorian required every year to deliver the Labor Government’s huge infrastructure agenda, the Budget provides $13.2 million to ensure the state’s quarry resources continue to grow in vital areas, while maximising liveability and reducing the costs of infrastructure.

A further $2.3 million will support our growing minerals exploration and mining sector, ensuring regional communities and farmers can have confidence in responsible development.

The Budget also provides $6 million to boost enforcement and compliance with Victorian hunting regulations. Staff at the Game Management Authority increased by 30 per cent to ensure hunting continues to be safe, responsible and sustainable.

Victoria produces some of the world’s best wine, and the Budget will boost wine exports through a $5 million Wine to the World initiative to promote the state’s unique wines to international markets.

We promised more support for small-scale producers to help take their premium produce to the world. The Budget includes $10.2 million to support producers expand their operations, create new jobs and increase visitors to regional Victoria.

The Budget also delivers on the Labor Government’s promise to improve pet welfare, with $3.3 million for animal shelters, community foster carers and support for more low-cost veterinary clinics.

Over half of Victoria’s workplace fatalities occur on farms. That’s why we will provide $3 million to improve health and safety outcomes on farms, working with the Victorian Farmers Federation to provide new farm safety officers, a farm workplace safety campaign and hundreds of face-to-face health checks.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Regional Development and Resources Jaclyn Symes

*“From our regional centres to small rural towns, we’re delivering for every corner of Victoria to make sure the whole state is a great place to live, work and visit.”*

*“Victoria is Australia’s number one food producer – and we want to keep it that way, so we’re investing in our hardworking farming communities so they can better deal with the challenges posed by climate change and biosecurity risks.”*

*“Our resources sector is growing rapidly, and we’re making the industry more responsible while providing the materials we need to deliver the Andrews Labor Government’s infrastructure projects right across the state.”*