

Victorian Budget 2009/10

A Regional Perspective

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First Things First

In preparing for today, I conducted a survey of a number of people I know living in Rural & Regional Victoria to see what was important to them. Their key items were:

- Community Resilience
- Regional Development Projects
- Transport
- First Home Buyers Grant
- Drought, Environment, Water & Sustainability in Growth Corridors
- Doctor Numbers & Health Services
- Education & School Facilities
- Rural Communications
- Rural Employment Opportunities & Initiatives

The Regional Budget – A Broad Overview

This budget is largely about JOBS and PEOPLE. For Rural and Regional Victoria, this is being achieved through:

- Supporting Communities affected by Bushfire
- The Cost of the Bushfires & Keeping Victorian Communities Safe
- Significant Infrastructure Spend:
 - Health
 - Education
 - Transport
- Service Delivery Initiatives

Supporting Bushfire Affected Communities

Over \$285 million in direct support through:

- Investment in individual case managers to work with those affected
- Compassionate assistance – temporary housing, funeral expenses, medical and counselling services and hardship grants
- Business assistance packages to help small businesses and primary producers
- Tourism package
- Clean up of bushfire affected areas
- Establishment of the Reconstructions & Recovery Authority
- Restoration of roads and public transport
- Additional funds for the Community Recovery Fund
- Animal welfare and stock management
- Waiving of duties and taxes

The Cost of Bushfire & Keeping Victorians Safe

- \$344 million for fire fighting undertaken
- \$24 million in additional Police Resources – including new police stations
- \$40 million for the Bushfire Royal Commission
- \$56 million for Emergency Service Communications
- \$57 million for New Radios and upgrades to current Networks
- Replacement of 87 CFA Appliances
- \$10.3 million investment in Rescue Vehicles and Kits
- 42 Ultra Light Tankers
- Additional VICSES Unit Funding
- \$20.7 million for communication Black Spots

Infrastructure Spend - Health

Some \$150 million Major Infrastructure Investment

- Stage 1 Bendigo Hospital redevelopment
- Expansion of operating theatres, acute beds and mental health beds at Geelong Hospital
- New coronary catheterisation facilities, day beds & womens & childrens services at Ballarat Hospital
- Warrnambool Hospital redevelopment including integrated community health facilities
- Alexandra District Hospital redevelopment & a co-located ambulance station

Investment in Replacement Medical Equipment (\$35m)

Infrastructure Spend - Education

School regeneration projects in Bendigo, Leongatha, Wangaratta & Wodonga

Science & maths specialist centre in Geelong

Modernisation projects in 2 regional schools

Future funding for 18 small rural schools

Upgrade of 44 smaller schools under the Better Schools Today Program

- Seems a short list, but don't underestimate the size of this investment – almost \$89 million

Infrastructure Spend - Transport

- \$102 million to upgrade major roads in regional Victoria
- \$55 million to upgrade the regional rail freight network
- \$57 million to upgrade the South Gippsland Highway for future flood proofing
- \$44 million over 4 years for the Nagambie Bypass
- \$28 million to reinstate rail services between Maryborough and Ballarat
- Improving bus services in Geelong with better links to Deakin University and the V/Line train services
- Upgrading regional train stations
- \$9.4 million to commence the upgrade of the Western Highway from Stawell to the South Australian Border
- The commencement of the Western Highway duplication from Ballarat to Stawell
- Commencement of the Nhill Trailer Exchange

Service Delivery Initiatives

- Extra dental treatments in Ballarat, Moe, Sale and Geelong
- \$45 million blitz on elective surgery
- Upgrading from analogue to digital mammography services to Breast Screen Victoria
- Increases in renal dialysis, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services
- A further investment of over \$68 million in Future Farming Strategies
- Further investment in Mental Health services
- Disability services
- Early intervention Children's services – particularly in Rural Victoria

Conclusions

- What a difficult environment to prepare a budget for all Victorians, particularly with the external shocks of;
 - The bush fire tragedy of February 7th
 - The incredible economic stress of the global downturn
- Supporting the economy by bringing forward a number of infrastructure projects that the regions have been looking for
- Disappointments:
 - Not much to assist the replacement of lost businesses in major Regional Cities
 - No tax relief for businesses struggling already
 - Recycling of water still missing as a priority
- The challenge will be to deliver what is a significant number of projects on time and on budget
- Attempting to be “as fair as possible for as many as possible” across the State

The “Hidden” Gems

- \$8.3 million to support Victorians with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- \$1.2 million supporting Country Football and Netball in upgrades of rural and regional facilities across the state
- I commend the Government on the “Respect” strategy, and its 3 main components:
 - Connecting young people with their communities
 - \$9.3 million volunteer strategy for community organisations & community participation,
 - \$4.5 million extension of the Graffiti Removal Program, and
 - \$3.9 million to recruit and recognise emergency services volunteers
- The announcement of the \$85.8 million social safety net – a package of initiatives to assist vulnerable Victorians
- The significant Public Housing and Homelessness package is also to be commended

THANK YOU!