



The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
House of Representatives
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Assistant Treasurer

Dear Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

**RE: BUDGET SUBMISSION
May 2021 Budget Priorities – Electorate of Indi**

Please see the attached priorities for my electorate of Indi ahead of the budget in May.

The economic stimulus and recovery projects in Section 1 were identified in consultation with the Hume Regional Local Government Network, which comprises the nine Local Government Areas in Indi (Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga) and finalised in a roundtable discussion on 28 January 2021.

Additional electorate-wide budget recommendations across rural health, education, local government, energy and other portfolios are also included in Section 2.

I ask that you consider these projects and recommendations in the upcoming budget, and I look forward to meeting with you and your cabinet colleagues throughout February to April to discuss them alongside the ERC process.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Haines'.

Dr Helen Haines MP

29 January 2021

cc: Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister

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MAY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITIES – ELECTORATE OF INDI

1.0 Resilience, Revitalisation and Recovery – Local Economic Stimulus Opportunities

1.1 Co-fund up to \$135 million in high-impact shovel-ready regional tourism projects

The North East tourism industry, including the Alpine Shire and Victorian High Country, was heavily impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires, with widespread closures, evacuations and direct fire damage. The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent lockdowns have resulted in an extended period of economic change and uncertainty for business operating across Victoria's High Country.

The visitor economy is critical to the economic recovery of the region, accounting for over 20% of gross regional product and 25% of employment. Visitor, expenditure and employment losses have continued to increase since January. In the six months to June 2020, the region lost up to 1.6 million visitors – approximately 95% of the business as usual market. Visitor expenditure also fell by between \$400 and \$639 million in the same period and up to 6,390 jobs were disrupted or lost.¹

The \$250 million package for regional tourism announced in the special budget in October 2020 was welcome but falls far short of activating the potential of shovel-ready regional tourism projects.

An opportunity exists for the Government to establish a permanent Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund – similar to the now retired Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program – to provide ongoing support for projects in bushfire- and lockdown-affected regions with strong domestic tourism potential like Indi.

The \$250 million national package announcement in the special budget in October 2020 also lacked sufficient funding for tourism marketing campaigns to maximise the benefits of infrastructure spend.

Government funding of \$3 million to peak tourism body Tourism North East will enable a high-impact, local and place-based marketing campaign to drive tourism back to the area. Tourism North East has a proven track record of delivering successful domestic campaigns, most recently leveraging \$1.1 million in marketing spend into \$30 million in return to the visitor economy in 2019.

¹ Economic Impact Analysis January – June 2020, *Tourism North East*, June 2020



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Table 1: Indi regional tourism projects awaiting funding ²

TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing	A hero product for the Alpine region and one of four iconic walks for Victoria, this project will develop the 57km five-day hike through the Alpine National Park from Falls Creek to Mt Hotham to attract domestic and international tourism. In 2020, the Victorian Government committed \$15 million for Phase One implementation of this project, with a further \$17 million sought to complete and activate the experience.	\$17 million <i>plus existing state co-fund</i>
Murray to Mountains Rail Trail Enhancements	This project aims to make the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail the pre-eminent rail trail in the Southern Hemisphere, drive repeat visitation and position the Trail as a 'must do' accessible cycling experience to Australian and international audiences. The project includes public art, landscaping, improved amenity options and new commercial opportunities across seven sections of the trail.	\$11.6 million
Growing Mt Hotham Project	Capital works to increase amenity and pedestrian safety of the Mt Hotham precinct including realignment of Great Alpine Road, a transit interchange and town square.	\$4.2 million
High Country Rail Trail extension	An iconic cycle path linking the Victorian High Country between Wodonga and Corryong this project will create cycle trail infrastructure that will build the region's economic development opportunities through increasing tourism visitation and multiday cycle experiences. This will prompt small business investment and local industry development into trail enhancements activities including bike hire, tours, accommodation and farm gate food experiences, creating local employment and building community economic resilience	\$3 million
Hothouse Theatre Upgrade	Redevelopment of the theatre and offices of the nationally acclaimed and one of only two regionally located producing theatre companies. This project will give new life to one of the region's key cultural tourism assets, allowing greater opportunities for professional creative development and performance, engagement with our indigenous community and improve educational offerings. The project has an	\$2.9 million

² Please note, projects are not listed in order of priority.



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
	economic benefit of \$4 million during build, a \$2.24 million ongoing economic benefit, and would be delivered within 12-24 months.	
Dargo High Plains Road Upgrade	This upgrade will improve access between North East Victoria and Gippsland, which is <i>critical during emergency events</i> . It would enhance road formation and drainage to improve road surface and accessibility. This will allow for earlier season opening and access to popular High Country and East Gippsland 4WD tracks and associated tourism.	\$4.8 million <i>open to co-fund</i>
Gateway to Alpine Adventure Dinner Plain	New and upgraded infrastructure will attract more first-time visitors during the snow and green seasons all year round. The funding will improve a number of facilities including shelters, amenities, increase car parking and build trail connections. The total spend is \$1.4 million. Victoria has already committed \$0.5m and council has committed an extra \$0.2m.	\$0.7 million <i>plus existing state co-fund</i>
Great Victorian Rail Trail (GVRT)	The GVRT is a 134km tourism recreational trail that follows the old railway through Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires. While the trail currently attracts 74,000 visitors per annum, the Council Partners associated with the trail are looking to activate it and support it in realising its true tourism potential through additional marketing and upgrade activities. The funding would create 42 new jobs and achieve an additional \$8.4 million in increased visitor numbers and length of stay.	\$1.7 million
Euroa Cinema Upgrade	Euroa Cinema is a highly regarded community and cultural asset operated by council. The seating within the cinema is worn and badly needs refurbishment. It is also intended to re-paint the interior of the cinema as this has not been done for many years. The improvements include providing all abilities access. The implementation timeline is six months.	\$0.13 million
Alexandra-Thornton-Eildon Rail Trail Link	THE GVRT currently terminates at Alexandra and there is no rail trail or similar linkage between the towns of Alexandra, Thornton and Eildon. Any cycle traffic between these towns at present is along the main road with other road users. This shovel ready project will link the premier tourist attractions of the GRVT and Lake Eildon. Eildon is a high profile water-based activity destination, notably fishing and boating. Provision of an off-road trail will add to the list of tourist offerings and encourage visitors to stay	\$7.8 million <i>\$1.6 million of this to be dedicated to the Eildon Tourist Trail.</i>



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
	longer to go for a pleasant walk or bike or horse ride along the Goulburn River Valley.	
Eildon Reserve Precinct Redevelopment – Splash and Skate Park	The splash and skate park within an existing Council-owned park will draw tourists into the centre of the town and act as an important community asset in an area of very low socio-economic status. A temporary skate park was created following the 2009 bushfires; however, this was only ever an interim solution and has recently been removed as it was beyond repair and unsafe. Community consultation has concluded. Final designs and project commencement on standby.	\$4.6 million
Alexandra Rotary Park Community & Visitor Activity Space	This shovel-ready project will provide regional standard adventure play equipment, BMX track and activities for visitors and the community. Alexandra is the administrative centre of the Shire, and supports Eildon’s tourism with its own range of accommodation, rural high street shops, cafes and restaurants. The total cost of the project is \$1.16 million. \$692,760 has already been funded by the State Government and local council.	\$543,080 <i>plus existing state co-fund</i>
Winton Motor Raceway and Holden Heritage Centre	Winton Motor Raceway wants to ensure that the history of the Holden name survives in the State where it all began. With easy access in a great regional location, the proposed Museum and Heritage Centre would be a significant attraction and economic driver for the North East Victorian economy.	\$5 million
Lake Eildon Masterplan - Skyline Road Precinct	Capitalising on the immersive views of Lake Eildon and the High Country from Skyline Road, the development of the Skyline Road Tourist Precinct will provide a new iconic touring experience in the region. The Precinct will deliver sealing of 18kms of road between Bonnie Doon and Eildon, improving safety and connectivity. The development of the Great Lake Touring Route including development of architectural lookouts at key vantage points, rezoning of land to accommodate commercial tourism development with views, development of a boutique distillery with small scale boutique accommodation, and supporting the development of sporting events around the lake.	\$25 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
Lake Eildon Masterplan - Fry Bay Nature Based Precinct	<p>The development of a nature-based precinct at Fry Bay in Goughs Bay will create a visitor destination for current and future visitors to Goughs Bay. The Precinct will deliver low impact eco retreat accommodation, an iconic architectural lookout, a walking trail connecting the township, and a new mountain bike trail.</p>	<p>\$23.9 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
Prosecco Road Development	<p>The Australian Prosecco market will triple in volume to around 34 million litres in the next 10 years. The King Valley has the potential to grow to 9 million litres with a wholesale value of \$100M by 2028. With 'The Prosecco Road' brand proposition, additional experiences that broaden and diversify the base of tourism drivers to the valley is also required with specific focus on the cycle, family, and arts visitation. This project focuses on improvements to digital and road infrastructure including the widening and upgrading of roads, support to the agricultural sector, development of tourism products including playgrounds and cycle tracks, and specialisation in export markets.</p>	<p>\$7.6 million <i>(in addition to \$4.32 million confirmed Victorian Government funding)</i></p>
Junction Place Hotel and Conference Centre, Wodonga	<p>A four-star hotel and conference centre has the potential to attract high-end demand for family/leisure and corporate visitation. Junction Place is regional Australia's largest urban renewal initiative and is bringing to life the former historic railway station and railyards in central Wodonga through a partnership between Development Victoria and local developer Central Place. This project will reposition the regional city's visitor economy and enhance Wodonga's profile as a tourist destination. The project would stimulate an economic benefit of \$71.7 million during the build phase and would be delivered within 6 to 24 months.</p>	<p>\$5 million <i>Total project cost of \$35 million</i></p>
Bonegilla township development	<p>The Bonegilla township is the gateway to the High Country Rail Trail, Hume Weir and the heritage-listed Bonegilla Migrant Experience. This project will develop and beautify the city entrance and improve public amenity to draw increased visitation to the village especially from those visiting the Bonegilla Migrant Experience. It will make it more attractive for people to relocate and stimulate growth, supporting the community and local businesses through visitation and economic return.</p>	<p>\$1 million</p>



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<p>Rockies Pedestrian Bridge</p>	<p>The Rockies pedestrian bridge forms part of the popular Euroa Sevens Creeks Walking Trail and is currently constructed of several planks positioned over the top of boulders with a single handrail to facilitate crossing of the creek at the north eastern end of the walk. The Seven Creeks Walking Trail is an extremely popular tourist attraction. An upgrade of this bridge is urgently needed in the interest of public safety and to facilitate all abilities access. This project would be completed within 12 months.</p>	<p>\$0.35 million</p>
<p>Chiltern Destination Playground</p>	<p>The Chiltern Destination Playground will be an iconic adventure playground experience, of scale, inspiring imagination and wonder. It will be a must-stop destination attraction for regional and travelling families. The playground connects the Goods Shed cycle hub to the lake precinct and the heritage streetscape, creating an active and vibrant visitor experience. The playground design interprets unique elements of the Chiltern Mount Pilot National Park (flora, fauna, conservation and Aboriginal cultural sites), Chiltern’s gold rush history and delivers an entry point experience to family-friendly cycle trails.</p>	<p>\$4.79 million</p>
<p>Rutherglen Wine, Walk, Cycle Trail</p>	<p>The Rutherglen Wine, Walk, Cycle Trail is a 48km network of multi-use trails with many ride or walk options to suit 1-hour to 3-day visitor experiences, aligned to the current and future visitor markets. The aim is to develop and expand walking, cycling and wine tourism and recreation by linking Rutherglen's town centre to Lake Moodemere, the Murray River, multiple winery cellar doors, food producers, cafes and restaurants. The trail includes a 14.82 kilometre section of the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and will activate local businesses, including those businesses which are not currently accessible via the Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail.</p>	<p>\$4.84 million</p>



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Unlock untapped potential in the Victorian Alpine Resorts

The Victorian Alpine Resorts are iconic tourism attractions and a key economic driver. Five of the six resorts (Falls Creek, Lake Mountain, Mt Buller, Mt Hotham, Mt Stirling) are within the Federal seat of Indi, with Mt Baw Baw being the one exception.

In 2019, these resorts attracted 1.3 million visitors that generated over \$2.5 billion in direct and indirect expenditure, \$1.1 billion in gross state product and more than 10,000 full time equivalent jobs. This represents 9% of Regional Victorian visitor spend, 9% of Regional Victorian tourism jobs and 28% of visitors to Victoria's High Country region.

To date, the level of public investment in these resorts has been incongruent with the benefit they provide to Victoria and Australia. The resorts have untapped potential as year-round tourism destinations that can be realised with investment in motivating product, experiences and infrastructure that will facilitate growth from intrastate, interstate and international visitors.

Despite efforts over many years, the resorts have not managed to realise this potential due to:

- Capacity issues constraining ability to meet current and projected snow season demand.
- Reliance on winter to deliver all economic benefits.
- A lack of low intensity experiences during the snow and green seasons.
- A lack of motivating green season products including hero experiences that drive demand.
- The “beach culture” during summer and public perception of bushfire risk in regional areas.
- Limited government investment compared with other regions and attractions such as the Shipwreck Coast, Great Barrier Reef, Gippsland, Philip Island Penguin Parade, or Werribee Zoo.

Federal investment, including co-investment with the Victorian Government, would:

1. Generate significant economic growth in the short and medium term by leveraging the interest of 1.5 million Victorians in alpine experiences and by attracting additional interstate and international visitors.
2. Leverage existing resort assets including the large number of accommodation and food & beverage establishments that sit largely idle for 8 months each year.
3. Extend the economic benefit to surrounding towns (Bright, Yea, Mansfield, Marysville, Myrtleford, Mt Beauty, Noojee and Omeo) from the snow season to all year round.
4. Continue climate change adaptation through further investment in snowmaking, development of activities that are less reliant on natural snow, and development of products, experiences and infrastructure that drive green season visitation.



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Tourism North East is developing a proposal for investment which requires \$437 million of public and \$298 million of private sector investment over 10 years. The economic impact of construction alone is \$2.2 billion and 5,700 jobs over 10 years.

By 2031, when all investments are complete and the projects are fully operational, there will be an additional 1.3 million visitors each year across the six resorts generating an additional \$1.8 billion p.a. in direct and indirect expenditure, \$0.8 billion p.a. in gross state product and an additional 8,000 ongoing jobs. This will include an additional 190,000 interstate visitors, generating \$267 million in direct and indirect expenditure.

As a result, the resorts will close to double their economic impact from 2031 with a total of 2.5 million visitors each year generating \$4.3 billion p.a. in direct and indirect expenditure, \$1.9 billion p.a. in gross state product and 18,000 ongoing full-time equivalent jobs.

The required investment across the six resorts is summarised below:

Investment	Public	Private	Total
<p>Vibrant, accessible and diverse alpine villages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amenity, beautification and placemaking projects including landscaping, lookouts, public art and placemaking, village lighting, village squares, and outdoor break out spaces to increase visitor satisfaction, grow length of stay and encourage repeat visitation. • Village community and visitor amenity buildings to provide indoor spaces for breakout, rest and protection from the weather. These buildings will centralise public amenity and improve the visitor experience, particularly for the daytrip and snow play market. These will also help the resorts move towards supporting a permanent population. • Projects to diversify accommodation stock and provide experiential accommodation to meet visitor demand. • Commercial development including diversification of retail, food and beverage offerings, night life and other commercial activities, and to encourage additional visitor spend, length of stay and activate the villages year-round. 	\$110m	\$184m	\$294m
<p>Infrastructure to enable sustainable growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport related projects to address a range of mountain access, transport, parking capacity and road quality issues as well as pedestrian and access issues. • Critical services and infrastructure projects to remove barriers to growth in winter and to create demand in green season including resource recovery huts, renewable power and internet upgrades. • Affordable staff accommodation projects, to avoid reducing the amount of available visitor accommodation and help make commercial operators within the resorts employers of choice. 	\$179m	\$45m	\$224m



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<p>Compelling and quality winter experiences for all visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of investments are needed to ensure the resorts provide a high quality experience for all visitors alike, whether they be snow play visitors or advanced skiers. • Investment in snowmaking, expansion of snow play and diversification of the traditional snow experience will help to secure the future of the winter experience. • Key projects include investment in and expansion of snow play zones across all resorts, night-time snow play at Lake Mountain, a scenic gondola at Mt Buller, and ski lift and terrain adaptation at Mt Baw Baw. 	\$76m	\$55m	\$131m
<p>Motivating green season products and experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of iconic walking experiences to motivate visitors in green season. This will include low intensity and view oriented short walks with architecturally designed experiences such as the Hotham Heaven Walk, as well as high intensity, multi-day walks utilising alpine huts for shelter. • Investment in mountain biking across all resorts, including trail upgrades and extensions within the Mt Buller mountain bike park and continued investment in Falls Creek mountain biking experiences. • A range of low intensity activities with broad appeal that encourage visitation across the year such as alpine coasters and ziplines, playgrounds, and pump tracks. 	\$71m	\$15m	\$86m
Total	\$437m	\$298m	\$736m

* Public and Private investment do not equal \$736 M due to rounding.



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1.2 Co-fund up \$400 million in stimulus-gearred shovel-ready infrastructure projects

In the electorate of Indi alone, there is around \$400 million worth of shovel-ready projects which could be funded under existing or new infrastructure funding schemes.

An opportunity exists for the Government to expand the eligibility and size of existing regional infrastructure investment funds, or create entirely new funds with broader guidelines, with the aim of funding more shovel-ready stimulus projects like the [selection](#) below.

Table 2: Indi shovel-ready infrastructure projects ³

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
Wangaratta Sports, Aquatic and Events Precinct	The project will integrate and sustainably redevelop the precinct to facilitate the expansion and renewal of the facilities and infrastructure which currently includes indoor and outdoor facilities, netball courts, indoor and outdoor football ovals, tennis, event space, club rooms and facilities for over 20 community groups, and the local showgrounds. It will deliver amenities, programs and services that respond to emerging trends and demands and focus on ensuring sustainable development for the future.	\$20 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
Benalla-Whitfield Road Upgrade	This project will see the last remaining 6km of gravel upgraded and sealed. This section of road is the last unsealed designated collector road within the Municipality. The project will support the growing tourism sector within the valley, providing crucial links for people moving throughout the region. Importantly, the project will improve the safety and accessibility for all people moving throughout the Valley. This is a very vulnerable area to bushfire which sharpens the need to complete the sealing. The terrain of the area adds to the significance of these roads.	\$7 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>

³ Please note, projects are not listed in order of priority.



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<p>LOGIC Intermodal Enabling Road Infrastructure</p>	<p>LOGIC is the Wodonga Council’s forward-looking industrial estate, established approximately 14 years ago. It has realised approximately \$25 million in land sales, more than \$900,000 per annum in municipal rates and more than 615 jobs. The Wodonga Council is in the process of installing a \$5 million Gas Gate in the estate, which is likely to strongly encourage continued growth. This intermodal facility benefits from an Specialised Container Transport rail terminal linked to future inland rail and a potential inland port for the North East of Victoria. The anticipated growth will increase demand on road and other Infrastructure (services). The Council is seeking \$5 million financial support to commence construction of the required enabling road infrastructure and services connections within the estate. These works are largely designed and ready to proceed to tender within weeks with construction able to commence now, and completed within 12 months.</p>	<p>\$5 million</p>
<p>Connecting Telecommunications link between the North East and Gippsland</p>	<p>Connecting the fibre optic cable network across the Great Dividing Range from Swifts Creek to Tambo Crossing will improve the resilience of telecommunications service from Harrietville to Dinner Plain, including Mount Hotham. Reliability of this line is critical for summer and snow season visitors, emergency services and the rapidly growing Alpine small business sector.</p>	<p>\$6 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p>Baranduda Fields Access Roads and Parking Areas</p>	<p>This project will see the provision of additional access and circulation roads and car parking areas for the new Baranduda Fields – a regional sporting facility. The additional funding will see early works related to Stage 2 commence, providing improved vehicle access/egress and circulation and additional car parking for large sporting events.</p>	<p>\$4 million</p>
<p>Wangaratta Aerodrome and Precinct</p>	<p>The Wangaratta Aerodrome supports emergency services, charter services, recreational aviation, pilot training, and heritage conservation and tourism. The revitalisation of the aerodrome set out in the Wangaratta Aerodrome Master Plan will ensure it meets commercial, recreational and emergency services needs (including air ambulance, police and air firefighting) for the next 20 years. This new development, when combined with the current employment on site, would lead to an aviation cluster with a total of 40 direct jobs and a further 6 indirect</p>	<p>\$28.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>



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	jobs by 2024. Infrastructure upgrades, works and the extension of aprons and taxiways will cost approximately \$14 million and could be co-funded by the State Government and private investors.	
Mansfield Lords Reserve Community Hub	With 2% annual population growth, this project provides a new multi-purpose community hub with female friendly change facilities, landscaping and civil works for multiple community groups and clubs. The Community Hub project will provide local jobs, building critical infrastructure for the current population and contribute to the liveability and attraction of the municipality for tree-changers.	\$3.7 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
Alexandra Streetscape Project	Alexandra is the administrative centre and largest town in the Murrindindi Shire, and is a community hub of shops and other businesses. The streetscape itself is very tired and unattractive which, given the importance of this town to the visitor economy, needs addressing.	\$3.4 million
Marysville Regeneration	Following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires the town of Marysville was redeveloped, however these works were not fully finished. Council has contributed significant funds in the 2019/20 financial year, however to complete these works support is required to the value of \$122,875. This will ensure that this beautiful tourist town, which has been severely impacted by COVID-19 and closure of the nearby snow resort can be ready to welcome back visitors. This project can be completed very quickly.	\$0.12 million
Lake Eildon Masterplan - Sewerage System Gough's Bay	The lack of township sewerage system and reticulated water prohibits investment in Goughs Bay and contributes to pollution in Lake Eildon. This project will deliver 18 kilometres of pipeline connecting Goughs Bay with Mansfield. Investment in sewerage infrastructure will help build the visitor nodes of Goughs Bay and Jerusalem Creek into key visitor destinations, by unlocking development potential through the removal of infrastructure barriers that can often deter potential investors, as well as improving environmental outcomes.	\$15.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>



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<p>Hanson Street Redevelopment of Residential CBD Area Streetscape in Corryong</p>	<p>As Council prioritises leveraging on the growing tourism market, importantly this project will deliver cycle lanes, car parking, median strip improvements, kerbing and landscaping, shopfront revitalisation and improved tourism collateral in Corryong’s CBD. The works will also rectify substantial drainage issues and result in improved community and visitor experience, instilling a sense of pride in a community that was at the heart of the Upper Murray Black Summer Bushfires.</p>	<p>\$2.9 million <i>Co-fund project</i></p>
<p>Benalla Town Hall Upgrade</p>	<p>The Town Hall was constructed as the Municipal Chambers and Shire Hall in 1883. The heritage listed building requires upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system and upgrades to the electrical and lighting equipment for the main stage and back of house areas. The Town Hall is used for a wide range of community activities including dances and formal balls, youth events, weddings, conferences, meetings and can seat up to 250 for community theatre.</p>	<p>\$700,000</p>

1.3 Critical Bushfire Resilience and Recovery Projects

The devastating Black Summer bushfires and subsequent Royal Commission have exposed failures in our existing critical infrastructure.

Immediate funding of the local bushfire resilience geared projects below could occur through amending existing schemes such as the Regional Connectivity Program, or by ensuring existing bushfire recovery and resilience funding schemes are fully capitalised and implemented in a transparent, equitable and evidence-based manner.

These and numerous other resilience projects are critical ahead of future bushfire seasons and were included in my previous budget submissions in March and August 2020.

Allocate an additional \$20 million to the Round 6 Mobile Black Spot Program or Regional Connectivity Program dedicated to applicants from high-risk bushfire communities

While much has been done over recent years to improve telecommunications access in North East Victoria, when disaster such as bushfires strike communities are often let down by mobile phone black spots, preventing them from accessing localised information through emergency services apps. An increasing reliance on telecommunications during emergencies, such as evacuation notices being sent via SMS, highlights the ongoing fragility of the services. North East Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone regions in the world and complete mobile phone coverage is essential.



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Existing telecommunications coverage throughout regional Australia must be improved to ensure communities can reliably access communications in both every day and emergency situations. Building on the focus in round 5A on high priority natural disaster prone areas, including those affected or prone to bushfire, an additional \$20 million in Round 6 (bringing the Mobile Black Spot Program to \$100 million, or building in a special category for high risk bushfire communities) will ensure those communities most at risk of communications outages during bushfires can remain safe and connected.

Invest \$15 million to build a renewable energy microgrid in Corryong

The recent bushfires have highlighted the vulnerability of existing power infrastructure in Indi. This was most notably demonstrated by the destruction of dozens of kilometres of main power lines between Tallangatta and Corryong which left Upper Murray communities without power and dependant on generator power a month after the fires. The outage of the ABC transmitter for Corryong, with many unable to tune in to emergency broadcasts, demonstrated the precarious nature of reliance on mains power.

A potential solution is the development of renewable energy microgrids which would allow communities to be self-sustainable in emergency situations. AusNet and Mondo applied for \$3 million for a Corryong microgrid feasibility study under the Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund – Microgrids 2019-20 but were ultimately unsuccessful despite a convincing business case. This Corryong microgrid could be built for a total of \$15 million, requiring \$12 million in addition to the \$3 million requested for the feasibility study.

Such an investment would complement the \$800,000 awarded through the Local Economic Recovery program to the establishment of independent energy nodes across the Upper Murray, by allowing those nodes to be connected to a broader micro-grid.

The Corryong micro-grid project should be funded as a priority project to stimulate the economy and build the resilience of power supply and telecommunications in the Upper Murray region.

Contribute to a new Incident Control Centre at Ovens

The Ovens Valley features the major population centres of Myrtleford and Bright. During the bushfires the Ovens Incident Control Centre coordinated the response to the Abbeyard Fire which threatened Mount Buffalo. A number of previously large regional fires have been coordinated from this centre, with as many as 90 responders stationed there during the January fires. However, the facility was built in the 1950s as a tobacco research centre and is not fit for purpose, and is long overdue for a replacement.

Invest \$275,000 in an automated weather station at Corryong

As Corryong does not have an automated weather station ('AWS') it must rely on the Khancoban weather station, which is 30km away and does not reflect Corryong weather conditions. The accurate recording of local weather conditions is vital for bushfire response and suppression, air transport of



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critically ill patients, search and rescue activities, and stock and crop management and domestic aircraft. My office has advocated in support of the AWS alongside Towong Shire Council, the District 24 Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police – Corryong and the Man from Snowy River Festival. The Bureau of Meteorology estimates the AWS will cost \$222,000. I therefore encourage you to make \$275,000 available to fund site leasing and preparation, construction of the AWS and five years of operating costs.

Invest in Wangaratta Regional Emergency Relief Facilities

During the 2020 fires the Rural City of Wangaratta provided a regional relief service, the likes of which has never previously been experienced. This was provided 24 hours a day for several weeks, housing community members from a range of adjoining municipalities. Whilst this service was very effective, the Rural City of Wangaratta did find that facilities at the Showgrounds particularly were inadequate. Kitchen and catering facilities, toilets and showers, powered areas for campers, secure housing for livestock and pets, were all barely sufficient. Given the likelihood of future emergency events an investment in upgrading these facilities is prudent and extremely important. The estimated cost of these upgrades is \$2.5 million.



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2.0 Electorate-wide Budget Priorities

2.1 Climate and Energy

Support the implementation of the Local Power Plan with funding of \$467m over 10 years

Under the Government’s current policy settings, regional Australia is set to experience a boom in renewable energy development over the coming decades. To ensure that everyday regional communities benefit from this investment boom, we must empower regional communities to own and develop their own renewable projects. This is called community energy. Over recent months I have developed a comprehensive policy framework to accelerate community-owned renewable energy across regional Australia - the *Local Power Plan*.

The *Local Power Plan* would:

- Establish 50 local power hubs across regional Australia and create a \$310m fund to support the development of community-owned projects;
- Implement a scheme to underwrite community investments in mid-scale renewable energy projects; and,
- Create a new requirement for developers of large-scale renewable energy projects to offer 20% equity to the local community.

As costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office, the *Local Power Plan* would require a \$467m investment over ten years, costing \$110m to the underlying cash balance out to 2022-23. Funding the *Plan* would be a modest financial cost, but a significant and meaningful investment in the future of regional Australia at precisely the moment when we most need to invest.

Support feasibility studies for new hydro-electric capacity in Indi

The Hume Region, which encompasses nearly all of Indi, has 13 times more pumped hydro storage potential than is required to support a 100% percent renewable grid for all of Australia. Increasing funding for Clean Energy Finance Corporation and Australian Renewable Energy Agency would enable feasibility studies to be conducted into pumped hydro in my electorate – a technology that is critical in providing storage for the increased uptake of solar and wind renewable energy.



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2.2 Local government

Increase Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue to rural and regional local governments, including through innovative stimulus-gear schemes

Commonwealth Government assistance to local councils through the Financial Assistance Grants program was last at 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (CTR) in 1996. I urge you to return Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1% of CTR to ensure regional councils can continue to provide adequate infrastructure and services programs. This could be through designated stimulus-driving initiatives where local governments are well-placed to lead immediate implementation, such as funding for a rural road and infrastructure maintenance program. This would be a timely and efficient use of public expenditure and provide a much-needed investment injection, as well as generate employment opportunities for regional and rural communities that position local councils as a critical player in the solution to the current economic situation.

2.3 Rural Health and Aged Care

Fund more Home Care Packages to allow people to age safely in place

The fragility of the residential aged care sector has been exposed by the coronavirus pandemic. The case for funding additional Home Care Packages has never been stronger. Supporting older Australians to age in place keeps them safe, healthy and independent, and out of residential care facilities for longer. As at September 2020, almost 100,000 senior Australians were waiting for access to their approved home care packages. Wait times for the packages have been an ongoing issue. In the three years to mid-2020, about 30,000 people died while waiting for services. One constituent waited over two years for her husband's Level 4 package. This is unacceptable. The Government should approve more Home Care Packages to reduce the wait list, particularly for people waiting for Level 3 and 4 packages, and ensure the almost \$1 billion of unspent funds is repurposed quickly to reduce harm to both providers and older Australians waiting for support to have a better quality of life.

Implement the recommendations of the Multi-Purpose Services Review and increase the Flexible Care Subsidy

The Multi-Purpose Service Program Review (MPS Review) made 13 recommendations to strengthen the MPS program. The Government should implement these as soon as possible to remove barriers to high-quality, sustainable and efficient aged care in regional and remote areas, notably:

- Recommendation 9: Review the Commonwealth's approach to the funding of accommodation and other aged care infrastructure in MPS with the aim of increasing the number of co-located health and aged care services and the provision of facilities which meet contemporary standards and expectations
- Recommendation 10: Review all Commonwealth rural and remote health, aged care and related programs (operational and capital) that currently exclude MPS, assessing the rationale



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for that exclusion and assuming future inclusion of the MPS unless there is a public net benefit in retaining the current policy.

Corryong Health and Alpine Health fall under a Multi-Purpose Service Funding Agreement and provide integrated health and aged care services to the frail aged in regional and remote communities. However, the Commonwealth’s contribution to these services, the Flexible Care Subsidy, has been frozen and has not kept pace with increasing resident acuity or complexity in regional settings, resulting in a funding shortfall that threatens quality of care and service viability. Increasing the Flexible Care Subsidy will allow these services to provide appropriate care for complex needs patients.

Co-fund up to \$145 million for priority projects at Albury Wodonga Health

There are a number of service and infrastructure upgrade projects in the pipeline at Albury Wodonga Health ranging from proof of concept through to shovel ready, listed below. The Government is encouraged to work in collaboration with state and local counterparts to realise the vision of these projects and usher in a new masterplan for the precinct in 2020-21.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
Women and Children's Wing, Albury Wodonga Health	A new, purpose-built women’s and children’s unit will be constructed on the site of the Albury campus of Albury Wodonga Health. The unit will provide the full range of services to support childbirth including antenatal clinics, outpatient services, birthing suites, dedicated theatre suite, inpatient wards, special care nursery and postnatal care clinics. Paediatric services will be co-located allowing specialist staff to support children who require hospital care or outpatient services including oncology and therapy services.	\$60 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
Community Services Hub	The project will provide easy access for community members to a range of Community services provided by AWH and its partners. It will deliver purpose built infrastructure with improved ICT for the following programs: Community mental health; Dental health; Child and family health; Hospital avoidance programs; Hospital in the home, post-acute care and community nursing; Community Rehabilitation, Violence and abuse prevention and support services; Pain management program. Potential partners including Aboriginal health services, General Practice, Day surgery, and government social services.	\$40 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>



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<p>Research and Education Hub into health impacts of natural disasters</p>	<p>A new, purpose-built research and education centre will be developed on the site of, or adjacent to the Albury campus of Albury Wodonga Health, consistent with the Albury City Council’s plans to develop a health precinct in the area. The centre will provide under-graduate and post-graduate student facilities including a simulation centre to support clinical training. AWH will work in partnership with the university sector to establish a strong translational research program including consideration of a Australian Rural and Regional Natural Disaster Health Research Institute to focus on the health impacts of natural disasters including drought, bushfire and pandemic and to develop new strategies in response.</p>	<p>\$40 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p>Brain and Mind Centre Albury - Phase 2</p>	<p>The new Brain and Mind centre opened in early 2020 and is providing community mental health and drug and alcohol services from a modern, purpose-built facility. Phase 2 would see the development of the second floor of the building to accommodate 38 additional workspaces, training facilities, student work areas, meeting rooms, storage and bathroom facilities to support the colocation of AWH’s mental health access and immediate response teams and NSW TAFE to provide on-site training for the mental health workforce. This will create a one-stop shop for consumers and integrated care opportunities. Planning for Phase 2 is well progressed.</p>	<p>\$0.5 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p>Pharmacy auto dispensing cabinets</p>	<p>AWH is introducing Pharmacy Auto Dispensing Cabinets to deliver better operational services through the digitisation of drug dispensing via automated dispensing cabinets. These cabinets increase safety and security for medication management and are considered best practice in modern pharmacy.</p>	<p>\$0.8 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p>AWH Master Plan</p>	<p>AWH has recently completed a Clinical Services plan which identifies the need for additional infrastructure to deliver services to meet current and project demand and to achieve its potential as a significant regional referral centre. A master plan will be completed in 2020/21 to determine the best location for these services and to establish the basis for business cases for future capital funding.</p>	<p>\$0.3 million provided by NSW Health. An additional \$0.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>



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Mechanical services upgrade	Foundation works need to occur across Wodonga campus to allow its mechanical services including air-conditioning, heating, electrical, fire and hydraulics to support new facilities including the \$5 million community hub and specialist clinics building and the proposed \$12million mental health rehabilitation unit.	\$3 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
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2.4 Education

Invest \$27.96 million in the Mansfield Autism Statewide Service

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services has supported Victorian families living with autism for 50 years and are ‘bursting at the seams’. Demand for services at MASS far outstrips supply. Their \$30 million masterplan for the recently purchased 100 acres in Mansfield will future proof the service, doubling employment and directly generating over 80 new FTE, stable and ongoing jobs, more than doubling client numbers, creating over 3000 new respite nights and up to 150 new training placements.

MASS requires capital expenditure assistance to realise their vision including Project Education: a new term placement and day school, Project Retreat: built accessible cabins and conference training centre, Project Residence: client residential facilities for placement, acute, respite and permanent care and Project Recreation: equine therapy and outdoor recreation facilities including a pool, sport hub, walking and bike tracks along with sensory gardens and a seed propagation work experience business.

Cost Benefit analysis return on investment is 1.6 with \$127 million in socioeconomic benefit over 10-year life of project across a diversity of portfolios including regional development, health, youth, family, disability, education and tourism. The project has now received planning approval from the Victorian Government.

This project was a priority opportunity in previous budget submissions, and remains a priority.

Fund priority actions in the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy

The Napthine Review has provided a blueprint for improving educational outcomes for rural students and has the backing of regional universities in my electorate such as La Trobe University and Charles Sturt University. While some of the Napthine Review recommendations were supported under the Jobs-ready Graduates package, I urge you to commit funding to implementing the recommendations in full.

Conduct a second Local Schools Community Fund round and increase funding to rural, regional and remote electorates with higher numbers of schools

The first Local Schools Community Fund identified a huge demand for funding for small capital projects in my electorate. As a large regional electorate covering 29,187km² Indi has 125 schools, more than the average outer regional electorate and more than double the national average. The \$200,000



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funding in this round did not come close to meeting the \$1.1 million worth of applications. A second round will help address need for vital services and infrastructure such as air-conditioning, computer or ICT facilities and counselling or youth mental health support. A tiered funding model, where electorates with higher numbers of schools receive more funding, should be considered.

Increase the maximum Child Care Subsidy from 85% to 95% to ensure universal access to affordable childcare and boost employment

Childcare providers in Indi – as in many parts of regional and metropolitan Australia – have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many providers in Indi are council-run, which meant they were excluded from JobKeeper and severely disadvantaged by the Relief Package introduced by the Government in April. Many providers nationally are now facing reduced attendance rates, and many parents who have lost work are now being priced out of childcare. This not only affects childhood education outcomes but is a significant drag on employment at precisely the worst time.

I have costed a policy with the Parliamentary Budget Office that would increase the maximum Child Care Subsidy from 85% to 95% at a cost of around \$1 billion a year over the forward estimates. This would be an important economic reform to support jobs in our recovery, and would support women disproportionately affected by job losses as a result of this pandemic to enter the labour force.

Establishing a Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer

The Wodonga Education First Youth Foyer (EFY Foyer) proposal is a partnership between seven key organisations for the provision of accommodation, support services, community engagement and education opportunities for the region's most vulnerable young people.

The proposal requires the construction and operation of an accommodation facility, housing 40 studio bedrooms for youth, experiencing or at risk of, homelessness. Participants will have access to affordable housing, government funded training and ongoing personal and educational support.

Wodonga TAFE is seeking **\$12 million** of Government and/or philanthropic funding contributors for the construction of the Youth Foyer and **\$2 million per annum** for ongoing operational and youth support services.

Youth Foyers provide integrated learning and accommodation for young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness with the aim of:

- Reducing the number cycling through the housing and homelessness system
- Increasing the number completing education qualifications and gaining productive employment
- Supporting young people to transition out of the EFY Foyer into private rental or other mainstream forms of accommodation such as student accommodation or with relatives.



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EFY Foyers achieve this by providing the time, personal attention, mentoring, coaching and access to the opportunities required to develop education and training pathways to employment and independent living. The proposed site will be located on Wodonga Institute of TAFE land at McKoy Street in West Wodonga, with both vocational and higher education in close proximity. La Trobe University is just a few minutes' walk away, and local public transport readily available.

Expansion of the Wodonga TAFE Logic Campus at Barnawartha North

Wodonga TAFE is recognised as the leading driver training organisation by Defence and the Transport and Logistics Industries. An opportunity now exists to expand and modernise the facility to meet emerging and future Industry needs. Wodonga TAFE seeks funding to expand the infrastructure and capability of the Logic Campus, providing a purpose-built training and vehicle testing facility for the future of defence, transport industry and emergency services. \$6.6 million is required to acquire 66.1 hectares of land, the first tranche of the expansion, with total cost of \$47.5 million + GST to develop a purpose-build and comprehensive national training facility. This project will create regional sustainable economic growth, employing 90 new employees with 35 additional instructors, while delivering a cost-effective driver training program for a range of Commonwealth clients that meets identified Government needs.

The project is budgeted at **\$47.5 million + GST**, and is open to co-fund arrangements between the Commonwealth and State Governments

Boost support for children and families' learning in Benalla

Benalla ranks in the top 5% of most-disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria. Tomorrow Today's Education Benalla Program (EBP) goal is to reduce disadvantage in Benalla and district by improving the educational outcomes of all children. It is a nationally significant place-based program.

The Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) is EBP's flagship initiative. It is a wraparound program that links families to community, literacy, developmental and social activities, and to referral agencies where needed. It currently reaches an extraordinary 80 per cent of Benalla families who have young children from birth to preschool age, and it is developing additional outreach activities to reach even more during COVID. The program recognises and supports the role of parents/carers as their child's first and most important educator, building parents' skills and knowledge around child development via facilitated discussion groups and child playtime.

PEEP is seeking **\$175K per year for 3 years** to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and ensure that the improvements in child development outcomes achieved in Benalla to date are not lost, but are further improved. Government funds will be matched by philanthropic funding, making up the total annual budget of \$350K.



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2.5 Trains

Ensure timely delivery and ongoing maintenance of the North East Rail Line upgrade

The adequacy of passenger rail services between Albury and Melbourne is a significant issue for residents and businesses within the region. The Government has committed \$235 million to this upgrade with completion scheduled in mid-2021, and I call upon the Government to ensure that the project delivers the upgrade to the standard and within the timeframes promised, and guarantee sufficient maintenance funding is committed to maintain the line to the upgraded standard.

Fund amenity and accessibility upgrades in regional railway precincts as part of Inland Rail

The Inland Rail runs through the townships of Wodonga, Wangaratta, Glenrowan, Benalla and Euroa. This project provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform the amenity and accessibility of railway precincts in these town centres, delivering a positive legacy for tourism, population growth and community pride. Communities and local councils have worked together to identify realistic and cost-effective design solutions with support from the Australian Rail Track Corporation. Yet the ability to seize these opportunities is restricted by the project's budget, scope and time restraints. With the fast-tracking of the Inland Rail through the JobMaker program and the early delivery of construction milestones for the North East Rail Line upgrade, surplus and/or additional funding should be allocated specifically to amenity and accessibility works to deliver precincts that our local communities can be proud of.

2.6 Agriculture

Invest in research into sustainable and regenerative agriculture

Prioritising funding for agricultural adaptation research and translation can equip farmers with the know-how to grow their business and strengthen their resilience in the face of a variable climate, including more frequent and severe periods of drought. This can include eco-services remuneration for farmers undertaking vital biodiversity work and carbon sequestration.

Support regional producers to capitalise on growth in the agriculture and tourism sectors

This support includes intensive programs for producers, manufacturers and service providers about best business practices, succession planning, exporting, marketing and branding, research and development, sales, and value-adding. These programs will support local growers and producers to expand their offering to both the domestic and international markets, including diversifying or seeking out new markets, creating long term job security and driving job creation. \$500,000 to \$1 million needs to be spent each year on this program. Funding partners can include the Commonwealth Government, State Government departments, trade and investment agencies and private enterprise.