

SMART GRANTS FOR INDI'S SMART FARMERS

It was great to be announcing with the federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud just over \$500,000 in Smart Farms grants for our smart farmers here in north-east Victoria. The Smart Farms Small Grants will support seven organisations in carrying out activities to increase farm productivity and boost natural resource management. They include:

- \$80,000 for AgBis Assist Ltd to help wine growers manage recovery, risk and resilience in the Wangaratta and Indigo shires.
 - \$99,500 for Burgoinee Creek Landcare Group Inc for a Climate Smart Farming for the Future project in the Wangaratta and Indigo shires.
 - \$99,600 for Charles Sturt University for raise awareness on benefits of dung beetles with producers across NSW and Victoria including two projects in the Towong and Alpine shires.
 - \$63,655 for a similar project on dung beetles by Landcare Victoria in the Wangaratta, Indigo and Towong shires.
 - \$79,600 for the Ovens Landcare Network for sustainable on-ground solutions in the Wangaratta and Alpine shires.
 - \$95,800 for the Wodonga Urban Landcare Network for a Growing Healthy Hectares North East project.
- Smart Farms Small Grants which is a key [National Landcare Program initiative](#).

LOWER ENERGY PRICES WILL DRIVE MANUFACTURING AND JOBS

The Nationals unashamedly advocate for Australia's abundant natural resources and critical minerals sectors, and the regional communities and jobs that it supports. We want to create jobs and opportunities for rural and regional Australians. Affordable, reliable power is key to that.

We have made that commitment clear in our Manufacturing 2035 plan. Fifteen years ago, Australia had some of the most affordable energy in the world, today we have some of the highest electricity prices for business.

The Nationals 9-point plan to double employment in Australian manufacturing:

1. Take action to protect strategic industries where subsidies in other countries have an adverse impact on Australia's ability to develop strategic industries.
2. Increase trade promotion efforts and grow exports for our manufacturing.
3. Expand the Regional Investment Corporation to include finance for strategic manufacturing industries.
4. Create a decentralised Office of Regional Manufacturing with offices in Gladstone and Newcastle.
5. Provide tax incentives to encourage investment in manufacturing capital, and in research and development.



6. Strengthen Government procurement policies to back Australian manufacturing.
7. Facilitate early exposure to trade qualifications and harmonise our qualifications and employment conditions.
8. Invest in reliable and affordable energy that can support manufacturing, including in coal and gas fired power.
9. Fund exploration to find a new oil province in Australia to replace the Bass Strait.

MORE JOBS IN INDI

More apprenticeships and traineeships in Indi will be available with the expansion of the government's targeted wage subsidy program. As part of the COVID recovery, a 50% wage subsidy for 12 months is paid to eligible businesses.

So far 828 apprentices and trainees in Indi have registered with the program. Visit [dese.gov.au](#)

COMMUNITY VISION

The Stronger Communities Programme provides grants of between \$2500 and \$20,000 to community organisations and local governments for small capital projects that deliver social benefits for your local communities.

Round 6 applications close on 22 March 2021. To learn more visit: [vicn.at/strong-communities](#)

VACCINE ROLL-OUT

The Government's COVID-19 Vaccination Program has started with more than 125,000 vulnerable Australians and essential workers so far vaccinated. More of our communities will follow in the coming weeks and months. You can find out more about the roll-out, priority groups and when it's your turn at: [health.gov.au](#).

WORKING FOR YOU

If you have any questions about COVID-19 or other support services and need some help, please contact my office on 02 6024 2560 or by email at this address: [senator.mckenzie@aph.gov.au](#)

During tough times The Nationals have your back.



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THE NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

NEWSLETTER
March 2021

Delivering what matters
to rural Australians...

Water, Agriculture and Bushfire Recovery the Focus of Ministerial Visits

We had a great win for irrigators in basin communities with Water Minister Keith Pitt announcing during a visit to northern Victoria that there'll be a shift to off-farm water recovery projects. We've made it very clear over the past year that no more water should be taken from our productive capacity and that Victorian irrigators have given too much already. It's had a deep negative impact on many of our communities and it's great to see the government has heard that message and is delivering on the strong representation made by your Nationals MPs and Senators.

By putting an end to buybacks and investing in off-farm water efficiency, river health and economic development and employment opportunities, we're making sure the concerns of our communities and farmers are the priority.

The shortage of labour and market supply issues are also an ongoing challenge for our growers and front of mind during discussions. The federal government has put in place a range of actions to support the ag sector and is just as frustrated as our growers with the Andrews Labor government's stalling – and double standards (think Australian Open) on the issue, to the detriment of our farming communities.

The following week Minister David Littleproud dropped by to say g'day and check in on farmers and bushfire affected communities on their recovery. He got a feel for how things were travelling during a meet and greet with mayors with our local leaders fully appreciating the opportunity to connect with the minister.

Then a full day meeting with Kiewa Valley dairy farmers talking about the mandatory code of conduct, power of supermarkets, market and manufacturing/food processing opportunities (also see page 4 for story on the Nationals 'Manufacturing 2035' plan); catching up with local farmers and founder of Fencing for Fires Jamie Wolf to discuss the bushfire recovery, the challenges and moving forward; and a roundtable with beef producers in which bushfire recovery was also raised along with levies, trade and other industry related issues that the Minister has taken on board. As will I in coming weeks following up on constructive discussions and ideas from the ministerial visits.

The Nationals Senate team is also gearing up for a fortnight of parliament sitting and estimates so stay tuned on more to come!

Senator Bridget McKenzie



What is Manufacturing 2035? visit [vicn.at/manufacturing-2035](#)

NEW BUSHFIRE RECOVERY PROJECTS DELIVER TOURISM, JOBS BOOST FOR VICTORIA

Communities across Gippsland, the Upper Murray and Alpine will benefit from more than \$30 million for extra bushfire recovery projects.

The 20 new Bushfire Recovery Regional Economic Stimulus and Resilience Grants have been awarded by the Australian and Victorian governments, under the jointly funded Local Economic Recovery program.

Further community grants rounds will open in March (Rd 2) and July (Rd 3). For more information about how to apply visit: bit.ly/3sjc8h3

The projects:

- \$5 million for Great River Road upgrades.
- \$2.6 million for Dargo High Plains Road upgrades.
- \$2.17 million for Upper Murray to protect communities against power outages.
- \$1.35 million for Mansfield Autism Statewide Services.
- \$870,000 for Wines of the King Valley to develop a smoke sensor network.
- \$600,000 to redevelop Alpine Hotel, Bright.
- \$375,000 for a cycle tourism and accommodation redevelopment in Bright.
- \$2.5 million for Falls Creek Alpine Resort to redevelop lakeside trailhead and foreshore.
- \$2.5 million to develop the Mt Hotham Snow Play and Activity Hub.
- \$2 million to develop the Dinner Plain recreation reserve and village centre.
- \$3 million to help rebuild the Mallacoota Abalone processing facility.
- \$2.8 million to upgrade Buchan streetscape.
- \$2.35 million for Sailors Grave Brewing to develop agri-tourism.
- \$1.5 million to support the first stage of the Metung Hot Springs tourism development.
- \$1 million to upgrade Bruthen streetscape.
- \$850,000 for Envite Environment.
- \$562,000 for the redevelopment of the Old Slipway in Lakes Entrance.
- \$400,000 for Tambo Valley Honey to develop an agri-tourism experience.
- \$267,000 for Destination Gippsland.
- \$190,000 to help redevelop and expand the Riviera Nautic jetty infrastructure.



Announcing our CEFC amendments at Parliament House with fellow Nationals Senators Susan McDonald (Qld), Sam McMahon (NT), Matt Canavan (Qld) and Perin Davey (NSW).

REMOVE RESTRICTIONS ON LOW EMISSIONS TECHNOLOGIES: NATS

As Nationals Senate Leader I was proud to outline The Nationals Senate Team's plan to move amendments to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) so it can invest in all technologies that can reduce emissions.

If Australia is genuine about getting to net zero emissions, we need to look at every available option.

The CEFC was set up to invest in all technologies that can reduce emissions. In its current form, that is simply not possible.

For too long, Australia has blocked energy innovations such as nuclear and carbon capture technologies in addition to allowing High Energy, Low Emissions projects.

The amendments from The Nationals Senate Team will remove the restrictions on the CEFC from investing in carbon capture and storage, nuclear technology or nuclear power.

The amendments will also allow the CEFC to invest in High Efficiency, Low Emissions coal-fired power stations. It is hypocritical to preach net zero while at the same time blocking a zero-emission technology like nuclear that can meet base load power requirements consistently and reliably.

Our amendments would make the CEFC's mandate consistent with government policy.

The Australian Government's *Low Emissions Technology Statement*, released last year includes consideration of emerging nuclear technologies like small modular reactors. In 2017, the Government committed to remove a ban on the CEFC being able to invest in carbon capture and storage technologies.

Carbon capture and storage technology has been acclaimed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency as critical to enabling the world to meet its emission reduction targets.

It is a proven low-emissions technology, just like nuclear generation.

There are more than 440 operable nuclear reactors in 30 countries supplying 10.5 per cent of the world's energy – with zero emissions.

Nuclear power generation worldwide avoids annually more than 2 billion tonnes of CO2-e emissions.

We compete against the world with one hand behind our back while other nations avail themselves of cutting edge, low emissions technologies.

ALP SELLS OUT REGIONAL VICTORIA FOR INNER CITY VOTES

It has been great to see my state Nationals colleagues calling out the appalling decision by the Andrews Labor Government to reduce the 2021 duck season.

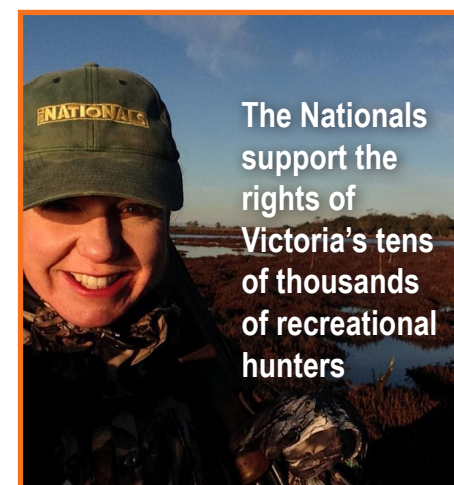
It was also reassuring to see the Australian Senate has supported The Nationals' call for Victoria to immediately reverse its decision to severely restrict the 2021 duck season.

During the February sitting fortnight, the Senate agreed that restrictions imposed by the Andrews Government were politically motivated to unfairly target law-abiding duck hunters and the rural communities their sustainable game hunting supported.

The Victorian Government reduced the duck hunting season from 12-weeks to only 20 days, lowered daily bag limits to only two birds, and delayed start times to 8 am for the first five days.

In 2019 hunting injected \$356 million into the Victorian economy, predominantly in regional areas.

The Victorian Premier wants us to believe the shortened season is based on science, not politics, but he will not produce



The Nationals support the rights of Victoria's tens of thousands of recreational hunters

the science he claims supports his case.

This should be seen for what it is: another step by Labor towards banning a lawful activity that delivers health, wellbeing, cultural and recreational benefits for participants and significant economic benefits for communities visited by law-abiding hunters.

The Nationals support the rights of Victoria's tens of thousands of recreational hunters who are again unfairly singled out by a premier willing to sell out regional Victorians to secure radical inner-city voters and further his ideological agenda.

HAVE YOUR SAY AND SUPPORT OUR TIMBER INDUSTRY

The importance of forestry to Australia cannot be understated. Forestry is one of the nation's largest manufacturing industries with an annual turnover of \$24 billion and 80,000 people directly employed along the value chain.

Australia grows top quality, sustainable timber and transforms it into world's best, renewable products.

Having been raised in a Victorian timber town, I am a proud advocate for Australia's forestry industry.

Following representations from industry last year, I introduced a Private Senator's Bill to Parliament to remove the ambiguity created following a federal court

decision with regard to Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

This month the Senate referred the Bill to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 11 May 2021.

The inquiry is currently accepting submissions and I strongly encourage you to have your say by visiting the Inquiry page at bit.ly/2NOtNyf.

Your submission will ensure the Senate Committee is fully informed as to why the passage of the Bill is so vitally important for our industry.

My book *John McEwen: Right man, right place, right time*, published by Connor Court Publishing, was launched on December 10 at Parliament House, Canberra, by *The Australian* editor-at-large Paul Kelly. Ask for it at your local bookshop, alternatively log on to: vicn.at/right-man-right-place-right-time.

