



BUILDING BETTER REGIONS THROUGHOUT VICTORIA

The Nationals in government will always back the regions. Under the latest round of our Building Better Regions Fund, we are rolling out a record \$300 million to continue boosting jobs and local economies.

We're investing more than \$50 million in funding for over 50 vital projects across Victoria to deliver vital community services and infrastructure.

This includes the Mansfield Autism Operation Gamechanger Project which will receive \$3.8 million in funding.

This is an incredibly important project, with the construction of an early intervention facility for children with autism.

Other projects to receive funding include:

- Rutherglen Wine Walk Cycle Trail.
- Growing Emerging Extension Leadership in Regional Australia.
- Building Resilient Communities in Swan Hill and Bendigo
- Food Fossickers Central Victorian Pantry.
- Kilmore Town Entry and Town Centre Precinct Gateway Signs.

To date, the Building Better Regions Fund has provided \$1.38 billion across nearly 1,300 projects nationally.

A full list is available here: www.business.gov.au/bbrf



BORDER HEALTH VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE

If you can't do it in person, you do it virtually. That's exactly what we did recently when hosting a ministerial visit to the north east with Nationals colleague, Dr David Gillespie.

It included hosting a virtual roundtable with local health providers from Albury-Wodonga to discuss on the ground challenges and support provided by the Australian Government.

Dr Gillespie, as Regional Health Minister, spoke about our government's investment in mental health services for the region. This includes \$1.27 million this year for headspace Albury-Wodonga and headspace Wangaratta.

We know our local health services have faced significant challenges in recent times due to natural disasters, border closures and overall increased demand.

The crux of this issue is that we need more medical professionals in regional towns like Albury-Wodonga, especially junior doctors.

As a result of discussions, I have written to both the Victorian Minister for Health, Martin Foley and the New South Wales Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard to invite them to inspect local facilities in the region.

Minister Gillespie has also indicated he will endeavor to visit our region as soon as he is able.



Senator the Hon. **BRIDGET McKENZIE**

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

MINISTER FOR REGIONALISATION, REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND REGIONAL EDUCATION

OUR PLAN TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

A MESSAGE FROM *Bridget*

Firstly, a big thanks to everyone for staying the course through the COVID-19 pandemic – we are getting through this together.

The Australian Government's vaccination rollout has seen 86.7% of Victorians receive their first dose, and 61.5% per cent receive their second. Nationally, there have been more than 31 million jabs administered and rising each day.

In a positive development for border communities, the new NSW Premier, Dominic Perrottet has recently spoken to his Victorian and Queensland counterparts about getting borders open as soon as possible.

Also very topical, as you'd no doubt be very aware, is the net-zero negotiations, with the federal Nationals team working hard to ensure the regions are protected. Please refer to some recent op-eds on this topic. We will be discussing it as a party room this Sunday.

It's imperative - given over a decade it is the National Party who has stood up for rural and regional people, and we must ensure that we protect them from any negative impacts.

Thanks so much for all your positive messages of support and congratulations.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office.

There is much work to do!

Senator Bridget McKenzie
Nationals Senator For Victoria
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate



AG VISA CREATED FOR RUAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Victorian farmers and primary producers are now a step closer to benefitting from the new Australian Agriculture Worker Visa.

The Nationals in government has amended the Migration Regulations to create the Ag Visa and continue along the pathway of providing an agriculture visa that will help secure the future of rural and regional Australia.

This historic announcement that the Ag Visa is now law ensures the visa will help secure the long-term labour force our farmers in regional Victoria need.

It's not just those on the farm that benefit - the fisheries, forestry and agricultural processing sectors will also get access to workers under this visa.

When we make a promise, we deliver.



For more information go to: www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au

Senator **BRIDGET McKENZIE**

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA • LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

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FASTER AND IMPROVED INTERNET CONNECTION FOR NORTH EAST VICTORIA

It was fantastic to announce more Indi homes and businesses will have faster and improved internet at a business breakfast in Wangaratta.

NBN Co is set to provide the towns of Mount Beauty, Tawonga South and the recently announced areas of Wangaratta and Myrtleford with upgraded Fibre to the Premises.

I also took the time to speak to local businesses to hear more about NBN Co's Wangaratta Business Fibre Zone.

This follows the NBN Co's announcement last September that Wangaratta would be one of almost 300 Business Fibre Zones to be rolled out across a fixed line footprint.

These latest works by NBN Co will create jobs for our community and support local businesses by allowing them to take advantage of the benefits of ultrafast broadband.

For more information on the NBN, head to www.nbnco.com.au



FUNDING LOCAL ROADS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Six local projects in North East Victoria will benefit from the government's \$2.5 billion Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, which is supporting local jobs, businesses and boosting the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every single job we support makes a huge difference in our local communities.

That's why we have moved quickly to approve more than \$810,000 in funding to flow to these projects which will see road maintenance, drainage, cycling and walking path, sporting and recreation facility and community facility works undertaken.

Not only will this program support jobs, construction businesses and economic growth, it will also improve road safety and local road networks, helping those in our community get home sooner and safer.

More information on the program is available here investment.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure_investment/local-roads-community-infrastructure-program

Keeping Australians safe from bushfires



\$4m boost for a Firefighting Large Air Tanker

BUSHFIRE PREPARATION

Did you know Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world?

As Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience, I've recently held briefings with Victorian emergency services ahead of the bushfire season.

In preparation for the next fire season, the Australian Government has announced the addition of a Large Air Tanker to provide year-round aerial firefighting capability.

An annual \$4 million boost to the National Aerial Firefighting Centre will allow a Large Air Tanker to be readily available for our earlier starting and later finishing fire seasons.

This Tanker will reduce our reliance on overseas aircraft and together with existing aerial firefighting resources will ensure we are well prepared to combat the threat of bushfires across the country.

We have acted on the recommendation of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Final Report for an aerial firefighting capability to be tasked according to the greatest national need.

In total, the Australian Government has increased its annual investment in aerial firefighting to more than \$30 million for the National Aerial Firefighting Centre to ensure additional resources are available to firefighters.



SCHOOL LEAVERS FORUM

A highlight of being back in Wodonga is catching up with local students at a school leavers forum hosted by my office and La Trobe University.

Year 12 students were provided an opportunity to hear from representatives from La Trobe University, Charles Sturt University, Wodonga TAFE and expert vocational and careers advisers.

As Minister for Regional Education, I'm all too aware of the challenges our students have endured with ongoing lockdowns in Victoria and remote learning and the effect it's had on their well-being.

Our government that has invested a record \$6.5 billion in mental health and suicide prevention services and support in 2021-22 that will benefit our students.

It's my hope that the forum provided local students the opportunity to have their questions answered and learn more about the pathways on offer in regional Victoria after school.

I wish all of our school leavers across Victoria the very best as they enter the next step in their life journey.

SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL SHOWS



The Nationals in government is again providing a boost to the iconic agricultural shows across regional Victoria.

Another \$25 million is being provided under the Supporting Agricultural Shows and Field Days and Supporting Showmen and Women programs.

COVID-19 has forced the cancellation of more than 700 show and field day events since early 2020. They have incurred significant financial losses for two consecutive years.

The flow-on effects to local communities like those in regional Victoria will be felt for years. \$34.5 million was provided under Round 1 of the Supporting Agricultural Shows and Field Days program to 378 show societies and field day organisers who cancelled in 2020.

We are continuing to back these events to help ease cash flow pressures.

Industry needs confidence and certainty to push through these times and be ready on the other side to contribute to the agriculture's \$100 billion by 2030 target.



International
Day of Rural
Women Panel
Member

Senator
the Hon.
Bridget
McKenzie

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

Did you know rural women (a quarter of the world's population) work as farmers, wage earners, and entrepreneurs?

We recently celebrated the huge role that grandmothers, daughters and rural mothers play in rural development, as part of the International Day of Rural Women.

It was a privilege to take part in Bayer Australia's International Day of Rural Women webinar event.

This was a fantastic opportunity to hear from other female representatives from across the Australian agriculture sector about what it means to be a rural woman.

A big shout out to all of our fabulous rural women in the Victorian Nationals!