



Media Release

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Federal Budget ticks some boxes – will the State Budget come close?

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) welcomes last night's Federal Budget which includes significant funding for rural and regional infrastructure that has been chronically underfunded.

"The Federal Budget has signalled some much needed funding for our sector and communities. We call on the Victorian Government to ensure that their upcoming budget equally recognises the importance of agriculture and rural and regional Victoria to the State's economy," said Mr David Jochinke, VFF President.

"An efficient agricultural supply chain relies on fit-for-purpose regional and rural roads, and common-sense heavy vehicle regulation and road access," he said. "We welcome funding for the improvement of key agricultural freight routes such as \$490 million for Roads of Strategic Importance in Victoria, and \$1 billion for the Princes Highway.

"The first and last mile of a freight journey is often the greatest inhibitor to overall productivity. We are very happy to see \$6 million to fund engineering assessments of local government road network infrastructure, \$275 million for the Bridges Renewal Program and \$1.1 billion for the Roads to Recovery Program," he said. "These targeted road infrastructure investments will start to fill some of the efficiency gaps in key freight routes and increase Victoria's supply chain productivity.

"Thriving, modern agricultural businesses also depend upon reliable, high-speed telecommunications. We welcome the \$220 million for the Stronger Regional Connectivity Package, which includes \$160 million for the next two phases of the Mobile Blackspots Program.

"These investments in road and telecommunication infrastructure will make a significant difference to the efficiency and productivity of Victoria's growing agricultural industry.

"In addition, the \$34 million Agriculture Stewardship Program will reward farmers for environmental outcomes, which will incentivise a range of positive activities on farms.

"Perhaps our greatest disappointment is a lack of genuine action on creating an Agricultural Visa," he said. "This is something the agricultural sector has been pursuing for some years, yet the Government has failed to recognise the importance and critical need for this.

"Meanwhile, in Victoria, Daniel Andrews tweeted yesterday that he 'never want[s] us to go back to the bad old days where there were two Victorians. One, in Melbourne, where all the money was spent and all the projects were built. And the other, in regional Victoria, where services were cut and people were ignored. That's not how we do things'.

"Regional Victoria is looking to the Premier to follow through on this tweet when his Government delivers its budget in 17 days.

“Having concluded his first 100 days in Government, Mr Andrews and his team have done little to address the needs of rural and regional Victoria from roads, to a long-term energy plan, to a promised rates review, to sufficient drought support.

“Regional Victorians are hurting and they are looking to the leadership of the Premier and his team to invest in the future of regional Victoria in the upcoming budget. Victorian farmers are seeking an equal footing; an equal playing field to that which city consumers and businesses enjoy every day.

“We congratulate the Federal Government on taking some positive steps forward that will benefit rural and regional Victoria, and call on the Federal Opposition to match these commitments in their budget response,” said Mr Jochinke.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.