

Media Release



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State Budget delivers wins for Victorian farmers, but work still to be done

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says today's State Budget represents a mixed-bag for Victorian agriculture with a number of big-ticket items supported and others left in the lurch.

VFF President David Jochinke said farmers and regional Victoria are big winners with substantial investment into regional connectivity, agriculture skills and agri-food research.

"\$300 million to address regional telecommunication blackspots in populated areas is a step in the right direction for regional Victoria."

"The next step will be to expand this investment state-wide to ensure universal access to critical telecommunication and infrastructure capable of delivering for regional Victorians."

"We are pleased to see significant investment in research and skills through the \$2 billion Breakthrough Victoria Fund and the Agricultural College Modernisation Program."

"It's vital we educate and equip the next generation of farmers with the skills and opportunities to support our growing agricultural industry."

Mr Jochinke said while any investment into agriculture is welcome, it's extremely disappointing major rail projects required to transport produce from paddock to port continue to be neglected.

"We're still no clearer on whether the incredibly important Murray Basin Rail Project will be finished as originally planned back in 2016."

"At a time when regional Victoria is crying out for investment to help lift us out of recession, the fact is billions are being spent on metropolitan rail projects, while the Murray Basin Rail Project enters its fifth year of uncertainty."

"We are also disappointed the Government has failed to secure access for Victorian farmers to the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme by matching the federal funding."

"We hope the Victorian Government finds the cash to assist farmers to invest in drought proofing water infrastructure."

The VFF is delighted that a number of its priority projects have been funded in the Budget, including:

- \$30m for the Agriculture Energy Investment Fund
- Funding to support Victoria's agricultural exporters
- Funding to address regional telecommunication blackspots
- Funding to assess regional Victoria's agriculture industry skill needs
- Increased funding for fuel reduction program, including \$5m for roadside activities

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