

# Media Release



Victorian  
Farmers  
Federation

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## State Budget light on regional road funding

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says today's State Budget fails to invest in regional freight routes, but includes some key investments for agriculture.

VFF President Emma Germano said the Victorian Government has missed an opportunity to drive growth in the regions by investing in freight routes and regional road maintenance.

"Regional communities and farmers will be disappointed that just weeks after calls for the lowering of speed limits on regional roads, the Government has failed to adequately invest in the maintenance and upgrades required to make rural and regional roads safe."

"Last year \$6.9 billion was invested in regional Victoria, a strong signal of the importance of our regional economy to the State's prosperity. This year that number is \$3.7 billion."

Ms Germano said there were some welcome investments in areas including regional mental health services, traceability and emergency services.

"Farmers are uniquely vulnerable to many factors that contribute to poor mental health and the VFF look forward to seeing this funding flow through to improving rural and regional mental health outcomes."

"The important investment into traceability and product integrity will support the future of Victoria's food and fibre industries and the VFF looks forward to working with the Government in implementing this program."

"The Black Summer bushfires demonstrated the vulnerability of our regional communities to the threat of fire. It's a vital investment in our emergency service capabilities continuing in this budget with the \$71.2 million CFA digital radio upgrade, investment in the replacement of CFA stations at Serpentine, Metcalfe and Irymple and \$104 million for recovery initiatives including financial counselling and mental health support."

The VFF is disappointed the budget does not include funding to provide Victorian farmers access to the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, but understand the Victorian and Federal Governments are in discussions on the matter.

Ms Germano said the introduction of new taxes could stymie growth in regional areas.

"The Government has introduced new taxes that could stifle agricultural investment and housing stock growth in regional Victoria."

"The stamp duty increase and windfall tax will all hit farmers and regional developers. Combined with the failure to fund the \$20,000 first home-owners grant, this will seriously impact the development of desperately needed new housing stock in regional Victoria."

“It’s tough enough to find a house in regional Victoria and, unfortunately, this budget is only going to make it tougher,” Ms Germano said.

**Other key budget investments include:**

- \$3.6 million to fund the operation of the Mode Shift Incentive Scheme for one year
- \$15.9 million for Murray River bridge crossing upgrades
- \$41.6 million to improve heavy vehicle road access and priority bridge upgrades
- \$20 million for the agriculture climate change pledge announced before the budget
- \$5.8 million for the Rural Financial Counselling Service
- \$6.3 million for Victoria’s fruit fly strategy announced before the budget
- \$1.4 million for the Victorian Rural women’s Network

**ENDS**

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