

Media Release



24 May 2023

Regional Victoria to suffer under state's debt

Victoria's State Budget reveals that regional Victorians and farmers are being unfairly forced to pay the price of the Andrews Government's infrastructure cost blowouts and years of fiscal mismanagement in Melbourne.

VFF President Emma Germano said regional Victorians were being made to pay as a consequence of the government's decisions.

"Whilst the Treasurer's speech talked a lot about paying down debt, it failed to mention the debt owed to regional communities who kept Victoria from recession in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Pallas also failed to mention that debt levels for the state of Victoria will continue to escalate over the next five years."

"Regional Victoria contributes almost 15 per cent to the state's economy and is the home of about a quarter of all Victorians, but has been left reeling with only five per cent investment in the State Budget."

Ms Germano said the future years of inequity in infrastructure spending would increase the cost of doing business for farmers and food prices for consumers.

"Whilst major infrastructure projects in Melbourne have blown out by over \$500 million, regional communities are left to pick up crumbs off the infrastructure table."

"A \$1.8 billion dollar, 10-year road maintenance program isn't long term funding certainty, it is playing make-believe. It does nothing to give road asset managers the certainty needed to plan works and line up contractors to fix our roads now."

"Failure to fix the state's rotten roads will just mean more pain for farmers, supply chains and regional Victorians."

Ms Germano said important government responsibilities like protecting agriculture from biosecurity threats would be put at risk by reduced funding to the Agriculture Department.

"Despite some short-term investment for biosecurity funding, the large reduction to the agriculture portfolio's budget will lump added strain onto the biosecurity system. Victorians just can't afford for this strain to reach breaking point," Ms Germano said.

ENDS

Media Contact:

Ryan Moloney, VFF, 0400 874 589

Farrer House 24-28 Collins Street Melbourne 3000

Ph. 1300 882 833 | Fax. 03 9207 5500 | E-mail. vff@vff.org.au | www.vff.org.au

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

ENDS

Media Contacts:

Emma Germano, VFF President, 0423 774 477

Ryan Moloney, VFF, 0400 874 589