



GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA

**ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE LINDA DESSAU AC
GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA**

**AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT**

**PARLIAMENT HOUSE
19 DECEMBER 2018**

Introduction

Honourable President and Members of the Legislative Council:

Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and I acknowledge their ongoing connection to it.

Following the results of the general election on 24 November, I commissioned the Leader of the Victorian Labor Party, Mr Daniel Andrews, to form a government.

Accordingly, I have called you together on this day, the first session of the 59th Parliament, to outline the policy agenda and legislative intentions of the Government in its second term.

Summary

The Government has spent the past four years investing in hospitals and schools, building road and rail, creating jobs and taking action on family violence.

In its second term, the Government will continue to deliver on its positive plan, creating a better, fairer and stronger Victoria.

The Government is committed to helping every child reach their full potential, making sure our loved ones get the care and dignity they deserve, and building the big infrastructure projects Victoria needs now, and for the future.

It is a plan that aims to create more jobs and to give more Victorians the security and dignity of work.

Over the next four years the Government will focus on:

- education
- jobs
- transport
- health; and
- fairness.

Education

The Government understands the profound power of education – the doors it opens and the opportunities it affords.

In its second term, the Government will continue to invest in local schools, kindergartens and TAFE to ensure that every Victorian has the chances in life they deserve – wherever they live and whatever their background.

Investing in kindergarten for all Victorian children

The Government understands that success begins with making sure Victorian children get the very best start in life.

That's why the Government will undertake the largest social, economic and educational reform in early childhood learning in Victoria's history.

The Government will invest almost \$5 billion over the next decade so that every Victorian child will have access to at least five hours of subsidised three-year-old kinder by 2022, increasing to 15 hours per week over the next decade.

Not only will this save families thousands of dollars, it will help get children ready for school and set them up for life.

As part of this investment, the Government will undertake the state's biggest early education build, with almost 1,000 new and upgraded kinders across the state.

Delivering great local schools

Continuing its investments in education, the Government will upgrade schools across the state.

And to make sure families in our fastest growing communities have a great local school they can rely on, the Government will open 100 new schools over the next eight years.

Fairness for our kids

The Government will also continue to make sure that every child can get the most of their education, expanding its school Breakfast Clubs and providing free school lunches to 1,000 schools across the state.

The Government will also invest in free dental care at all public primary and secondary schools, rolling out 250 dental vans and saving families up to \$400 per year on their child's dental care.

Rebuilding Victoria's TAFEs

And because the Government understands that TAFE changes lives, it will continue its rebuild of Victoria's training system.

On top of the free TAFE courses in priority areas, the Government will establish the Building Better TAFEs Fund – \$220 million to rebuild and revamp TAFEs across the state.

Jobs

The Government believes in good, secure jobs.

Jobs that give Victorians dignity and security and an opportunity to build their futures.

Protecting penalty rates

In its second term, the Government will enshrine public holidays in law, including Easter Sunday, Christmas Day and Grand Final Friday, to permanently protect penalty rates for thousands of Victorian workers.

Protecting Victorians and their entitlements at work

And because this Government believes in fair pay for fair work, it will introduce new legislation to make wage theft a criminal offence, with significant penalties for employers who deliberately and dishonestly underpay their workers.

The Government will also continue to implement new labour hire licensing and portable long service arrangements legislated by the previous Parliament, and continue the role of the Victorian Wage Inspectorate in protecting the rights of workers.

The Government believes that every worker should make it home safely, which is why it will introduce a new offence to make workplace manslaughter a crime.

These new laws will make sure that if an employer's negligence causes death, they are held to account, and it will help to create a culture where the safety of workers is given the priority it deserves.

Creating jobs in regional Victoria

The Government will build on its efforts in creating thousands of new jobs, in every corner of the state.

That includes new jobs in the Latrobe Valley by basing a new office of Solar Victoria in Morwell.

The Government will help grow Victoria's craft producers, creating new jobs and attracting even more visitors from interstate and overseas, with a dedicated \$10 million grant fund.

The Government will also help create more jobs in Victoria's agriculture industry, supporting our farming families, investing in our agricultural colleges and continuing its support for young farmers.

Transport

The Government has used its purchasing power to help create more jobs for Victorians, including mandating a minimum requirement for local content on its major projects and requiring that 10 percent of work is to be done by trainees, apprentices, and cadets.

The Government will continue to make sure Victorian jobs are at the heart of its efforts to build a world-class transport system.

The Suburban Rail Loop

To keep up with our growing population and to help connect Victoria, the Government will begin planning on the Suburban Rail Loop.

The Suburban Rail Loop will be an underground train network that connects every major train line from Cheltenham to Werribee – including a link to Melbourne Airport – with 12 new underground stations.

The Suburban Rail Loop will also create regional super hubs at Clayton, Broadmeadows and Sunshine, and take 200,000 cars off our roads every day.

Western Rail Plan

The Government's Western Rail Plan recognises the growth of Melbourne's western suburbs and the popularity of Geelong and Ballarat as commuter hubs.

The Western Rail Plan includes planning for the full separation of regional and metro services on the Geelong and Ballarat lines – the first step in delivering fast rail to these cities – meaning fewer stops, faster trips and less crowded trains for local passengers.

Cranbourne Duplication

The Government also acknowledges the growing needs of Melbourne's south east.

That's why the Government will invest \$750 million in the Cranbourne Line Duplication Project to duplicate eight kilometres of rail track between Cranbourne and Dandenong and remove the bottlenecks that cause delays.

This will allow the number of train services to be doubled during peak times, delivering trains every ten minutes to Lynbrook, Merinda Park and Cranbourne Stations.

Removing dangerous Level Crossings

The Government has already removed 29 of our state's most dangerous and congested level crossings.

The Government will build on this work, removing a total of 75 level crossings by 2025.

Airport Rail

The Government will also provide up to \$5 billion towards a new Airport Rail Link, matching the funding provided by the Commonwealth Government and making sure work on this much-talked about project can begin.

North East Link

To better connect our city and our state, the Government will build the \$16.5 billion North East Link project, reducing travel times between Melbourne's north and south by up to 30 minutes and taking thousands of cars off local roads.

Fixing local roads for local drivers

The Government will continue its investment in local roads, with plans to fix thousands of kilometres of roads across the state, in communities from Ballarat to Barwon Heads.

11,000 more train station car parks

And to make it easier for commuters to find a car park, the Government's \$150 million Car Parks for Commuters Fund will see over 11,000 new and upgraded car spaces at some of the state's busiest metropolitan and regional train stations.

Health

The Government also wants to make sure every Victorian has access to quality healthcare close to home.

Building better hospitals

The Government believes that begins with ensuring a strong hospital system.

Building on its existing investments, the Government will invest \$675 million to build, expand and upgrade ten community hospitals across the state, providing even more Victorians with the care they need closer to home

The Government will also build a new public hospital in Footscray that will accommodate 504 beds, easing the pressure on inner-city hospitals.

The new Footscray Hospital will be located on the campus of Victoria University, and will serve as a major tertiary and training hospital and hub, and help meet the growing demand for healthcare from local families.

The Government will also invest an additional \$10 million towards the ongoing redevelopment of Wangaratta Hospital, so local doctors and nurses can deliver the very best care.

The Government will also redevelop Frankston Hospital to accommodate 120 new beds and build a new maternity ward, obstetrics ward, women's clinic, paediatric ward and special care nursery, as well as two entire floors devoted to mental health, to meet growing demand as more young families move to Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs.

Regional Investments

The Government will continue to invest in healthcare for regional patients, delivering 500,000 extra specialist appointments in regional communities over the next four years.

This will save Victorian patients thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket private specialist sessions and will mean regional patients no longer have to spend hours away from loved ones to access specialist care.

The Government also recognises that farmers in our rural communities are less likely to visit their GP, and more likely to face complications with injury and illness.

That's why the Government will provide an extra \$4 million to the National Centre for Farmer Health to ensure that Victorian farmers can continue to rely on the vital care they receive through the Centre. This will assist the Centre to continue its work in providing on-the-ground and immediate support to farmers in partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation.

Royal Commission into Mental Health

The Government recognises that mental wellbeing is just as important as physical wellbeing.

And over the course of their lifetime, at least one in two Victorians will struggle with a mental health condition.

The Government recognises that more can, and should, be done.

That's why this Government will establish a Royal Commission into Mental Health.

The first of its kind in Australia, the Commission will focus on the quality and cost of care across Victoria's healthcare system, address early intervention and addiction, and examine how the Government can better support families and mental health workers.

This builds on the Government's commitment to introduce provisional acceptance WorkCover payments for mental health injuries sustained by our emergency workers, rolling out to every Victorian worker in the next two years.

The Very Best Start

The Government acknowledges that right now, the price of IVF makes it inaccessible for many Victorians.

The Government will invest \$32 million to help make sure more Victorians can start a family with access to low-cost, subsidised IVF services and will establish bulk-billing IVF clinics across Victoria.

The Government will also invest \$22 million to give new parents a Baby Bundle with essential baby products and information focused on safe sleeping, feeding and healthy development.

The Government will also invest \$232 million to build seven new Early Parenting Centres, refurbish two more and deliver a range of vital services to help more than 4,500 Victorian families in those critical early months and years.

And because there's nothing more important than the safety of our children, the Government will invest \$4 million to fund Neighbourhood Houses and community organisations right across Victoria to provide families free car seat fitting and safety checks.

Backing Victorian nurses, midwives and paramedics

The Government will always support the vital role that nurses and midwives play in caring for Victorian patients, and the importance of maintaining nurse-patient ratios.

The Government has already enshrined minimum nurse and midwife to patient ratios in law, and in its second term will further strengthen these lifesaving protections.

As part of this reform, the Government will recruit 1,100 new nurses and midwives so that patients are cared for in their times of need.

The Government also wants to make sure that in an emergency, Victorians can be confident they will continue to get the fast, life-saving care they need.

The Government will respect and support the work of our paramedics with 90 new recruits, introducing 23 more ambulances on the roads and investing \$25 million to upgrade and build new ambulance stations across the state.

Fairness

As the Victorian economy continues to grow, the Government wants to make sure that success is shared with every community in every corner of our state.

Engaging with Aboriginal Victorians on Treaty

The Government recognises the importance of respecting and listening to Victoria's Aboriginal communities.

And in its second term, the Government will facilitate the first round of the Treaty Community Engagement Program to ensure the voices of Aboriginal Victorians are at the heart of the Treaty process.

Investing in our multicultural communities

The Government believes that Victoria's multiculturalism is a pivotal part of our state's story and success.

The Government will continue to support this proud diversity, with investments to help more of our multicultural communities celebrate and share their traditions and heritage.

Building new public housing

The Government will replace up to 2,500 old public housing properties with modern, comfortable, energy efficient and secure properties.

The Government will also invest a further \$209 million to build 1,000 new public housing properties across the state.

Recognising that family violence is a major contributor to homelessness, and that women often flee violence with their children, the Government will ensure that many of these new properties are two or three-bedroom homes that can accommodate a family

Family Violence

The Government will also continue to meet its commitment to implement every single one of the 227 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

This includes doubling the number of specialist family violence financial counsellors to help more victim survivors as they rebuild their lives.

Supporting Victoria's LGBTI communities

The Government is proud to stand with Victoria's LGBTI communities.

Understanding that LGBTI Victorians face higher rates of depression and suicide, the Government will invest in more counselling services for LGBTI Victorians and their families, including increasing mental health support through Switchboard Victoria.

More green spaces for our communities

Our community parks are integral to bringing people together and promoting a healthy and active lifestyle.

The Government aims to make sure that every Victorian has access to quality local parks no matter where they live.

The Government has committed \$150 million to create more than 6,500 hectares of new parklands and new walking and bike trails across Victoria.

Easing energy costs

The Government will stand up for families and for fairness, delivering new assistance to help Victorians with the cost of living.

The Government will reform Victoria's energy sector to help reduce power prices.

The reforms will enforce stronger punishments for retailers who do the wrong thing and better protections for consumers.

This builds on the Government's commitment to install solar panels for 700,000 Victorian homeowners and renters.

This investment will help Victorians save around \$890 a year on their electricity bills.

The Government will also invest in new solar hot water systems and batteries for even more households, and support the accreditation of 4,500 electricians to ensure the highest safety standards.

The Government will also increase Victoria's Renewable Energy Target to 50 per cent by 2030, creating thousands of jobs, lowering power bills and helping to protect the environment.

Integrity of public institutions

The Government will introduce legislation to strengthen parliamentary standards, including removing the role of parliament in setting MP salaries.

The Government is also committed to improving our state's integrity and accountability system so that governments are better placed to deliver for all Victorians.

Closing

Honourable members, I have outlined for you the Government's program for this Parliament.

It is an optimistic and positive plan, designed to meet the challenges our state faces, while demonstrating the Government's commitment to creating a better, fairer and stronger Victoria.

Although each of you comes from a different background and offers a different perspective, I trust that working together you will serve the people of Victoria with courage and conviction.

It is now my pleasure to wish you well and declare open the 59th Parliament of Victoria.