



GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA

ADDRESS BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE ALEX CHERNOV AC QC
GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA**

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

**PARLIAMENT HOUSE
23 DECEMBER 2014**

Introduction

Honourable President and Members of the Legislative Council:

Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather today, the Kulin nation.

The general election on 29 November resulted in a change of government in Victoria.

Following the election, I commissioned the Leader of the Victorian Labor Party, Mr Daniel Andrews, to form a new government.

Accordingly, I have called you together on this day, the first session of the 58th Parliament, to outline the policy agenda and legislative intentions of this new government in its first term.

Summary

The Government has promised to invest in hospitals, ambulances and schools, create jobs, improve public transport and take action on family violence.

The Government will help Victorians find meaningful work and give everyone access to quality services and a lifestyle that is admired by the rest of the world.

The Government describes its policy agenda as a positive plan for Victoria. Over the next four years the Government will focus on:

- jobs and growth
- education and skills
- health and wellbeing
- world-class transport
- a safe and just society
- sustainable and liveable communities
- reforming the Parliament and the public sector.

1. Jobs and Growth

The Government believes that Victorians deserve well-paid, meaningful jobs that are safe and secure. A strong economy means more jobs for Victorians.

The Government sees its role as investing in Victoria's industries to create jobs and drive growth, and supporting education and skills so our next generation have a chance.

The Government will immediately implement Back To Work, a landmark plan to work with business leaders to grow industries and help create 100,000 full-time jobs for the unemployed. The plan includes:

- the introduction of the Back To Work Bill to provide financial support to employers for hiring unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers
- the establishment of the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel – an independent body of senior business and industry leaders, providing direct advice to the Premier on the expenditure of a \$500 million fund for jobs and investment
- the establishment of the \$200 million Future Industries Fund to support job-creating projects in high-growth areas, including pharmaceuticals, energy, food and fibre, and international education
- the establishment of the \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund to support job-creating projects in regional Victoria
- expanding the international Victorian Government Business Office network and delivering a comprehensive program of inbound trade missions to Victoria.

The Government understands that Victoria needs an infrastructure plan that supports a broad, long-term vision for the State.

The Government will establish Infrastructure Victoria to provide independent, transparent advice on our state's priorities and fill a pipeline of projects.

2. Education and Skills

The Government understands that Victoria cannot have a prosperous future without an educated, highly-skilled workforce that can seize new opportunities in a changing economy.

The Government aims to make Victoria the Education State – strengthening our economy and the skills of its people.

The Government has outlined a plan to make our schools the best in the country by investing \$510 million to upgrade and rebuild Government schools and \$120 million to upgrade and rebuild Catholic and independent schools

The Government will also help struggling families with the extra costs of education by supporting State Schools Relief to provide new school uniforms and funding 500 breakfast clubs to feed 25,000 children across the State.

The Government will also establish a Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund so no child misses out on outdoor learning and recreation.

Tech Schools will be established across the State for students in Years 7 to 12. The ten new facilities focus on local industries and will be run by local schools, TAFEs, universities and businesses.

Tech school students will spend a set period of time each week enhancing their skills, while also maintaining their enrolment at their local secondary school.

The Government will establish the Doctors in Schools program, which will see doctors visit schools on a weekly basis to treat students in disadvantaged areas.

The Government has also pledged \$100 million to fund an asbestos removal program, so all Victorian government schools can be asbestos-free by 2020.

TAFE and Training

The Government believes that our economy will be in danger without a strong TAFE system.

The Government has created a \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund to reopen closed campuses, upgrade buildings, workshops, labs and classrooms, and save those institutes at risk of financial ruin.

A VET Funding Review will be conducted to develop stable funding methods to improve Victoria's training system, in consultation with public and private providers.

The Government wants to encourage more young people to take up apprenticeships. In one initiative, the Government will offer apprentices half-price car registration for the vehicles they use for their trade.

3. Health and Wellbeing

The Government will invest in Victoria's health system to give our loved ones the dignity they deserve and the care they need.

The Government will enshrine in legislation the ratios of nurses and midwives to patients and improve these ratios over time.

Our growing and ageing population places pressure on Victoria's hospitals. This challenge will be met with \$200 million to open more hospital beds and operating theatres so more patients can be treated.

The Government has also pledged \$100 million to reduce ambulance response times in an effort to save lives.

This fund will support initiatives that prioritise ambulances for the sickest patients and upgrade ambulance stations, vehicles and equipment.

24-hour pharmacies, each with their own nurse on-staff to provide medical advice and services after hours, will also be funded.

The pharmacies will give families, shift workers and others needing non-emergency care an alternative to hospital, reducing pressure on emergency departments.

The Government will fund a major, \$106.3 million expansion of Casey Hospital to cater for 12,000 more patients, 8,000 more surgeries and 500 more births and build the hospital's first intensive care unit in one of Australia's fastest growing areas.

The Government will build the Western Women's and Children's Hospital in Sunshine. The new five-storey centre will bring the best care closer to home for families in the West.

The Government will build the Victorian Heart Hospital to transform our health system and bring the world's best cardiovascular care, research and training to Victoria.

The Government will completely rebuild Orygen Youth Health's dilapidated Parkville facility, home to the world's largest research institute for youth mental health.

The Government also wants Victoria to lead the world in medical technology, researching cures for chronic disease and developing devices that change lives.

Plans include a \$60 million investment in the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery at St Vincent's Hospital – Australia's first research and education centre for biomedical engineering.

The centre will bring together leading doctors, scientists and researchers, create 1,080 jobs and assist an industry that will support an estimated 10,000 jobs over the next 15 years.

4. World-Class Public Transport and Better Local Roads

The Government will build a world-class public transport system and improve local roads. This will give Victorians more than a better commute to work – it will give them a better quality of life.

The Government will embark on Project 10,000 – a landmark plan to transform public transport, reduce congestion and create 10,000 construction jobs.

Level crossings lock up roads, slow down trains and put lives in danger. The Government will remove 50 of Victoria's most dangerous and congested level crossings, funded by the lease of the Port of Melbourne.

The Government will invest \$300 million towards Melbourne Metro Rail, a project that will double the size of the City Loop, build five new stations and a new underground line, and reduce the gridlock in the train system.

The \$500 million West Gate Distributor will take 5,000 trucks a day off the West Gate Bridge and send them directly to the Port.

Under the Government's trial of the 'Homesafe' program, public transport will run 24 hours a day on weekends and 2am shuttle buses will take commuters to major regional cities.

The South Morang train line will be extended to Mernda. Melbourne's growth areas will also benefit from a \$100 million plan to add more bus routes and services.

V/Line services will depart Geelong every 20 minutes between 9am and 3pm, adding 22 more trips to the daily timetable, and Bendigo will get a dedicated suburban rail service.

The Government wants to fix the local roads that Victorians use every day. The Government will guarantee \$1 billion to repair and upgrade suburban roads and \$1 billion to repair and upgrade roads in regional Victoria.

Duplication of the Chandler Highway Bridge will ease congestion for thousands of Victorians who use the bridge every day, and a \$175 million commitment will see Thompsons Road duplicated between East Link and Clyde Road in Cranbourne.

The Government has promised the largest ever investment in driver training and education for young people, to reduce the road toll and cement Victoria as the world leader in road safety.

Every Year 10 student will be enrolled in a free defensive driving course. This program will help them make better, safer decisions on the road.

5. A Safe and Just Society

All Victorians have the right to feel safe – on the streets, at their schools, on their computer, and in their home.

The Government believes family violence is the biggest law and order issue in this state.

Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence will be established, to examine a system that the Government believes does not adequately protect victims or punish perpetrators.

It will be an investigation from the ground up, covering criminal law, the courts, support services, the health system, and alcohol and drug treatment. It will also look at the resources and tools available to hardworking police officers.

The Government will implement all the recommendations of the Royal Commission once it reports to Victorians. Until then, the Government will also provide a \$22.7 million boost to relieve pressure on family violence support services.

More police officers will be put back on the frontline, with custody officers introduced to take over the supervision of prisoners in police cells.

The Government will support those who protect us, funding 350 additional firefighters for the Country Fire Authority and 100 for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, as well as additional fire stations, trucks and equipment.

The Government will also introduce presumptive rights legislation for firefighters who make cancer compensation claims relating to their work.

6. Sustainable and Liveable Communities

Built and natural environments define our quality of life. The Government understands it has a responsibility to protect Victoria's heritage and maintain its liveability.

Environment

The Victorian renewable energy sector will be expanded to create new jobs and support a cleaner environment.

A \$20 million New Energy Jobs Fund will offer grants of up to \$1 million to firms specialising in high-growth renewable sectors. Planning restrictions will be amended so that more wind farms can be built in Victoria.

Arts, Sports, Culture and Creativity

Public holidays are opportunity for families and friends to take a break from normal work or studies. Easter Sunday and the Friday before Grand Final Day will be declared as public holidays in Victoria.

Community sports clubs across Victoria will be upgraded as part of a \$100 million plan to improve grounds and facilities. A fund will also upgrade womens change rooms and facilities at clubs across the State.

Other upgrades include the Simonds Stadium in Geelong, the Eureka Stadium in Ballarat, St Kilda's Junction Oval, the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and the State Library.

The Government will also introduce Music Works, a \$22.2 million plan to boost the local music industry and support local jobs in creative industries.

Planning

A truly liveable Victoria is one where everyone can access the services and open spaces that are essential for a good life, no matter where they live.

The Government believes new communities should be developed in stages, hand-in-hand with health, education, community, transport, and recreational services.

A \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities fund will be established to help regional towns attract families and young people to set up their home and stay.

Communities will be given a fair go at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and a real voice in the planning process.

Under this Government, councils will be also forced to cap their rates at the Consumer Price Index and justify any further increases.

7. Reform of the Parliament and the Public Sector

The Government will reform the processes that govern the conduct of this Parliament. Reforms will make Government business more transparent and Ministers more accountable.

So Members of Parliament are not compromised in the performance of their duties, random breath testing will be introduced for all Members during sitting weeks.

Reforms to the public sector will achieve \$334.5 million in savings. Initiatives include:

- more efficient government car fleet arrangements
- reducing the number of executive officers
- reducing the use of labour hire firms
- ending taxpayer-funded political advertising.

Conclusion

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

It is an ambitious program designed to match the challenges the State faces and demonstrates the desire the Government has expressed to create a better, stronger and fairer society for all Victorians.

I now formally open this Parliament, and pray that God may guide your deliberations.