

Investing to build better regions

18/06/2019 | Tim Whetstone MP | Better Services | More Jobs

South Australians living in regional and rural communities will benefit from the Marshall Liberal Government's major investment in schools, hospitals, roads, emergency services, housing and tourism that will ensure continued positive economic and jobs growth.

The 2019-20 State Budget recognises the enormous importance of the regions as a key economic driver for the State – across primary production, tourism, fisheries and forestry – and invests a record \$1.1 billion over 8 years for regional road projects and infrastructure upgrades to help save lives on country roads.

This includes a record \$878 million of new funding for regional roads and infrastructure – the single biggest injection of new funding in a State Budget for regional roads in South Australia's history.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Tim Whetstone said the Government was delighted to invest in the regions, which had been long-ignored under the former Labor administration.

“Finally, regional South Australia has a Government that listens to them and recognises their immense value to our state – both economically and socially,” said Minister Whetstone.

“Our regions contribute around \$25 billion a year to our state's economy and we want to see continued growth.”

Some of the record \$1.1 billion in regional infrastructure projects over 8 years outlined in the 2019-20 State Budget include:

- Road upgrades, including additional overtaking lanes and shoulder sealing (\$143 million);
- Eyre Highway (\$125 million to upgrade South Australia's section from Port Augusta to Perth – including \$32 million to upgrade Eyre Peninsula Roads following the closure of the rail line);
- Sturt Highway from Renmark to Gawler (\$87.5 million);
- Barrier Highway from Cockburn to Burra (\$62.5 million);
- Horrocks Highway Corridor (\$55 million);
- Duplication of Victor Harbor Road between Main South Road and McLaren Vale (\$92 million);
- Kangaroo Island roads (\$1 million);
- Princes Highway upgrade (\$250 million);
- Granite Island causeway refurbishment (\$20 million);
- Regional and remote airstrips (\$1.8 million);
- \$14 million to support the construction of the new Thomas Foods Facility;
- \$14 million towards the Naracoorte and Kroemers Crossing roundabouts;
- \$11 million for increased Dublin Saleyards access; and
- \$1 million to open Bratten Bridge to road trains.

These initiatives are *in addition* to the existing annual regional maintenance program worth \$237 million over 4 years.

The Government's investment in regional infrastructure is supported by the Government's commitment to make available 30 per cent of mineral and petroleum royalties towards the Regional Roads and Infrastructure Fund (\$341 million over four years).

They build on other projects announced in last year's State Budget including the \$200 million Duplication of the Joy Baluch AM Bridge project, the \$90 million Port Wakefield Overpass and Highway Duplication project and the \$14.6 million Penola Bypass project.

"This budget also provides \$25 million to upgrade the 100-year-old Dog Fence, which our primary producers have long-identified as a key piece of infrastructure to protect our livestock industry," said Minister Whetstone.

"The Marshall Liberal Government, working collaboratively with the Morrison Coalition Government and industry, will deliver this multi-generational investment with the Federal and State Governments providing \$10 million each and industry providing \$5 million.

"Telecommunications are also vitally important to regional communities to enable businesses to reach customers and grow.

"This is why we will continue to put additional funding (\$10 million over three years announced in the 2018-19 Budget) towards the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Program to improve efficiency and boost jobs.

"The \$15 million annual Regional Growth Fund continues to unlock economic activity across our communities rewarding those businesses and organisations which show vision and ambition.

"Projects such as the duplication of Victor Harbor Road between Main South Road and McLaren Vale and upgrading the Horrocks Highway will improve safety and boost productivity for those who rely on regional roads.

"We will also deliver \$143 million towards road safety upgrades, including additional overtaking lanes and shoulder sealing to facilitate increased speed limits on various regional roads.

"This massive investment will build our regions and help save lives on our country roads."

The Government also maintains its commitments from the 2018-19 Budget to country health, with a \$140 million injection over ten years to address the backlog in capital works projects, while \$20 million over four years will address the shortage of doctors and other healthcare professionals in rural areas.

The Budget is also investing \$1.4 billion into capital projects to improve school facilities across the state, support sustainable enrolment growth and transition Year 7 into high school.

Regional tourism operators will also benefit from an extra \$33 million in Tourism marketing (in addition to the \$10 million provided in last year's Budget for 2019-20) from the Economic and Business Growth Fund to enable the South Australian Tourism Commission to further promote South Australia to international and interstate markets.

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