

Media Release



28 May 2019 / Media contact: Liddy Clark 0403 542 411

The state government needs to provide long term financial support for our growing communities

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) welcomes the Andrews Labor Government's continued investment in infrastructure for all Victorians.

We are pleased with the \$6.6 billion for the additional 25 level crossing removals in suburban Melbourne to increase the capacity of our train network, as well as the further reduction in payroll tax for regional Victoria to stimulate economic growth. However, the government has missed an important opportunity to transform recycling and planning systems to help our communities.

\$6.6 million for 2019-2020 (\$35 million in total to 2022) in response to our waste and recycling crisis is inadequate, considering this issue impacts every Victorian. Councils have an important role to play including community education and procurement of recycled products to stimulate the market. However, the rate capping policy is constraining councils' abilities to pursue these initiatives. The state government can do much more to lead the way, including introducing a container deposit scheme, investing in research and development of recycled materials and incentivizing councils to purchase goods made from recycled products.

The VLGA is also disappointed with the one off \$5 million in the budget to "support the planning system to management and capitalise on Victoria's growth". Our member councils are telling us that the current planning system is outdated and lacks rigor for councils to take decisive actions on behalf of their communities such as addressing gaps in local infrastructure and taking bold actions to address the risks to communities posed by climate change.

The budget placed heavy emphasis on road and rail capital works. While these much-needed projects are vital to maintain the economic output and livability of Victoria, the VLGA is disappointed with the lack of commitment to outer suburban bus services. The government is only investing \$30.5 million over four years improving bus services and network efficiency, a fraction of the \$6.6 billion for level crossing removals and \$15.6 billion for the construction of North East Link. Bus networks are vital links in our public transport link, and they must be funded appropriately. Without adequate buses, overcrowding on trains and roads will continue.

The one off \$50 million allocated for the Growing Suburbs Fund is welcomed, but councils need certainty and long term commitment from the state government so they can plan for vital community infrastructure to cater for Victoria's growing population. Just as councils have four year strategic plans, the state government needs to provide long term financial support for our growing communities.

The VLGA will continue to advocate on behalf of councils on these and other issues, so councils can effectively deliver services benefiting their communities. **-ENDS-**

Please attribute to VLGA President Marg Attley

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