



The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP  
Treasurer  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP  
Assistant Treasurer

Dear Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer

**RE: BUDGET SUBMISSION  
October 2020 Budget Priorities – Electorate of Indi**

Please see the attached priorities for my electorate of Indi ahead of the special budget in October.

The economic stimulus and bushfire resilience projects in Section 1 were identified in consultation with the Hume Regional Local Government Network, which comprises the nine Local Government Areas in Indi (Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Strathbogie, Towong, Wangaratta and Wodonga) and finalised in a roundtable discussion on 6 August 2020.

Additional recommendations about broader budget policy settings across rural health, education, local government, energy and other portfolios are also included in Section 2.

I ask that you consider these projects and recommendations in the upcoming budget, and I look forward to meeting with you and your cabinet colleagues throughout August and September to discuss them.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Haines'.

**Dr Helen Haines MP**

18 August 2020

cc: Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister

**Dr Helen Haines MP**

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## OCTOBER 2020 BUDGET PRIORITIES – ELECTORATE OF INDI

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### 1.0 Resilience, Revitalisation and Recovery – Local Economic Stimulus Opportunities

#### 1.1 Co-fund up to \$146.7 million in high-impact shovel-ready regional tourism projects

The North East tourism industry, including the Alpine Shire and Victorian High Country, was heavily impacted by the summer fires, with widespread closures, evacuations and direct fire damage. The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent lockdowns have resulted in an extended period of economic change and uncertainty for business operating across Victoria's High Country.

The visitor economy is critical to the economic recovery of the region, accounting for over 20% of gross regional product and 25% of employment. Visitor, expenditure and employment losses have continued to increase since January. In the six months to June 2020, the region lost up to 1.6 million visitors – approximately 95% of the business as usual market. Visitor expenditure also fell by between \$400 and \$639 million in the same period and up to 6,390 jobs were disrupted or lost.<sup>1</sup>

At this critical juncture, dedicated stimulus investment in tourism infrastructure projects of regional significance can offset losses and ready the region for a major revitalisation of its tourist sector as the economy re-opens to domestic markets. High-potential domestic tourism markets in regions like Indi need dedicated, accessible, future-facing stimulus support to ensure we are on the front foot as the domestic tourism economy re-opens. Existing funds such as the Building Better Regions Fund, the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, and the smaller tourism-focussed components of the bushfire recovery package are piecemeal and insufficient for the regional tourism sector to fully capitalise on incoming demand spikes in domestic tourism.

**The Government should establish a dedicated Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund – similar to the now retired Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program – aimed at supporting projects in bushfire- and lockdown-affected regions with strong domestic tourism potential like Indi.**

**To complement this, the Government should also allocate an additional \$3 million in funding to peak tourism body Tourism North East for a high-impact, local and place-based marketing campaign to drive tourism back to the area. Tourism North East is well positioned to drive a nimble, region-led campaign and has a proven track record of delivering successful domestic campaigns from the region; most recently leveraging \$1.1 million in marketing spend into \$30 million in return to the visitor economy in 2019.**

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Impact Analysis January – June 2020, *Tourism North East*, June 2020



## OCTOBER 2020 BUDGET PRIORITIES – ELECTORATE OF INDI

**Table 1: Indi projects that could be funded by the new Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund**

TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing</b>	A hero product for the alpine region, this project will develop the 37km three-day hike through the Alpine National Park from Falls Creek to Mt Hotham to attract domestic and international tourism. The Victorian Government committed \$2 million for the next phase of this project in its 2018-19 state budget.	\$32 million <i>plus state co-fund</i>
<b>Murray to Mountains Rail Trail Enhancements</b>	This project aims to make the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail the pre-eminent rail trail in the Southern Hemisphere, drive repeat visitation and position the Trail as a 'must do' accessible cycling experience to Australian and international audiences. The project includes public art, landscaping, improved amenity options and new commercial opportunities across seven sections of the trail.	\$11.6 million
<b>Growing Mt Hotham Project</b>	Capital works to increase amenity and pedestrian safety of Mt Hotham precinct including realignment of Great Alpine Road, a transit interchange and town square.	\$4.2 million
<b>High Country Rail Trail extension</b>	This project will link Towong and Indigo council projects to create a multiday cycle experience between Wodonga and Victoria's High Country. It will have physical and mental health benefits by increasing opportunities for cycling, provide an affordable and independent travel option while improving social cohesion. It will reduce road traffic and demand for car parking.	\$3 million
<b>Hothouse Theatre Upgrade</b>	Redevelopment of the theatre and offices of the nationally acclaimed and one of only two regionally located producing theatre companies. This project will give new life to one of the region's key cultural tourism assets, allowing greater opportunities for professional creative development and performance, engagement with our indigenous community and improve educational offerings. The project has an economic benefit of \$4 million during build, a \$2.24 million ongoing economic benefit, and would be delivered within 12-24 months.	\$2.9 million



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>Dargo High Plains Road Upgrade</b>	This upgrade will improve access between NE Victoria and Gippsland, which is <i>critical during emergency events</i> . It would also build up road formation and improve drainage to improve road surface and accessibility. This will allow for earlier season opening and access to popular High Country and East Gippsland 4WD tracks and associated tourism.	\$4.8 million <i>open to co-fund</i>
<b>Gateway to Alpine Adventure Dinner Plain</b>	New and upgraded infrastructure will attract more first-time visitors during the snow and green seasons all year round. The funding will improve a number of facilities including shelters, amenities, increase car parking and build trail connections. The total spend is \$1.4 million. Victoria has already committed \$0.5m and council has committed an extra \$0.2m.	\$0.7 million <i>plus co-fund</i>
<b>Great Victorian Rail Trail (GVRT)</b>	The GVRT is a 134km tourism recreational trail that follows the old railway through Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires. While the trail currently attracts 74,000 visitors per annum, the Council Partners associated with the trail are looking to activate it and support it in realising its true tourism potential through additional marketing and upgrade activities. The funding would create 42 new jobs and achieve an additional \$8.4 million in increased visitor numbers and length of stay.	\$1.7 million
<b>Euroa Cinema Upgrade</b>	Euroa Cinema is a highly regarded community and cultural asset operated by council. The seating within the cinema is worn and badly needs refurbishment. It is also intended to re-paint the interior of the cinema as this has not been done for many years. The improvements include providing all abilities access. The implementation timeline is six months.	\$0.13 million
<b>Alexandra-Thornton-Eildon Rail Trail Link</b>	THE GVRT currently terminates at Alexandra and there is no rail trail or similar linkage between the towns of Alexandra, Thornton and Eildon. Any cycle traffic between these towns at present is along the main road alongside other road users. This shovel ready project will build a connecting trail from major caravan parks and outdoor educations centre into the town of Eildon. Eildon is a high profile water-based activity destination, notably fishing and boating. Provision of an off-road trail will add to the list of tourist offerings and encourages visitors to stay longer to go for a pleasant walk or bike or horse ride along the Goulburn River Valley.	\$7.8 million  <i>\$1.6 million of this to be dedicated to the Eildon Tourist Trail.</i>



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>Eildon Reserve Precinct Redevelopment – Splash and Skate Park</b>	The splash and skate park within an existing Council-owned park will draw tourists into the centre of the town and act as an important community asset in an area of very low socio-economic status. A temporary skate park was created following the 2009 bushfires; however, this was only ever an interim solution and has recently been removed as it was beyond repair and unsafe. Community consultation has concluded. Final designs and project commencement on standby.	\$4.6 million
<b>Alexandra Rotary Park Community &amp; Visitor Activity Space</b>	This project will provide regional standard adventure play equipment, BMX track and activities for visitors and the community. Alexandra is the administrative centre of the Shire, and supports Eildon’s tourism with its own range of accommodation, rural high street shops, cafes and restaurants.	\$543,080  <i>Stage 1 cost is \$692,760, of which Victoria has committed \$250,000, and council \$442,760.</i>
<b>Ned Kelly Alive Glenrowan</b>	The project will develop a signature experience within Glenrowan that will attract visitors and expenditure involving an architecturally designed tower in the centre of town overlooking historical sites, with augmented reality enhancing the immersive experience. The Ned Kelly Story is the most well known of our colonial history but to date has no nationally significant tourist offering. It is expected that the tower will attract 11,000 visitors per year achieving a cumulative economic impact over 10 years of over \$9.7 million and supporting 114 jobs.	\$4 million <i>part-funded, open to co-fund</i>
<b>Holden Heritage Centre</b>	The Benalla Auto Club have been in negotiations with Holden to become the custodians of Holden’s Australian car collection, memorabilia and production records. The plans are to house this significant piece of Australian history in a purpose-built <i>Holden Heritage Centre</i> located at the Winton Motor Raceway in Benalla Victoria. Positioned just off the Hume Highway 2 hours north of Melbourne, the centre would include a museum, workshop, gift shop, corporate area and a café. The <i>Heritage Centre</i> would be a significant visitor destination and drive economic development in the North East of Victoria.	\$3 million



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>Lake Eildon Masterplan - Skyline Road Precinct</b>	<p>Capitalising on the immersive views of Lake Eildon and the High Country from Skyline Road, the development of the Skyline Road Tourist Precinct will provide a new iconic touring experience in the region. The Precinct will deliver sealing of 18kms of road between Bonnie Doon and Eildon, improving safety and connectivity. The development of the Great Lake Touring Route including development of architectural lookouts at key vantage points, rezoning of land to accommodate commercial tourism development with views, development of a boutique distillery with small scale boutique accommodation, and supporting the development of sporting events around the lake.</p>	<p>\$25 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<b>Lake Eildon Masterplan - Fry Bay Nature Based Precinct</b>	<p>The development of a nature-based precinct at Fry Bay in Goughs Bay will create a visitor destination for current and future visitors to Goughs Bay. The Precinct will deliver low impact eco retreat accommodation, an iconic architectural lookout, a walking trail connecting the township, and a new mountain bike trail.</p>	<p>\$23.9 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<b>Prosecco Road Development</b>	<p>The Australian Prosecco market will triple in volume to around 34 million litres in the next 10 years. The King Valley has the potential to grow to 9 million litres with a wholesale value of \$100M by 2028. With 'The Prosecco Road' brand proposition, additional experiences that broaden and diversify the base of tourism drivers to the valley is also required with specific focus on the cycle, family, and arts visitation. This project focuses on improvements to digital and road infrastructure including the widening and upgrading of roads, support to the agricultural sector, development of tourism products including playgrounds and cycle tracks, and specialisation in export markets.</p>	<p>\$7.6 million <i>open to co-fund</i></p>
<b>Junction Place Hotel and Conference Centre</b>	<p>A four-star hotel and conference centre has the potential to attract high-end demand for family/leisure and corporate visitation Junction Place is regional Australia's largest urban renewal initiative and is bringing to life the former historic railway station and railyards in central Wodonga through a partnership between Development Victoria and local developer Central Place. This project will reposition the regional city's visitor economy and enhance Wodonga's profile as a tourist destination.</p>	<p>\$5 million  <i>Total project cost of \$35 million</i></p>



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TOURISM PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
	The project would stimulate an economic benefit of \$71.7 million during the build phase and would be delivered within 6 to 24 months.	
<b>Bonegilla township development</b>	The Bonegilla township is the gateway to the High Country Rail Trail, Hume Weir and the heritage-listed Bonegilla Migrant Experience. This project will develop and beautify the city entrance and improve public amenity to draw increased visitation to the village especially from those visiting the Bonegilla Migrant Experience. It will make it more attractive for people to relocate and stimulate growth, supporting the community and local businesses through visitation and economic return.	\$1 million
<b>Rockies Pedestrian Bridge</b>	The Rockies pedestrian bridge forms part of the popular Euroa Sevens Creeks Walking Trail and is currently constructed of several planks positioned over the top of boulders with a single handrail to facilitate crossing of the creek at the north eastern end of the walk. The Seven Creeks Walking Trail is an extremely popular tourist attraction. An upgrade of this bridge is urgently needed in the interest of public safety and to facilitate all abilities access. This project would be completed within 12 months.	\$0.35 million

### 1.2 Co-fund up to \$403.46 million in stimulus-gear shovel-ready infrastructure projects

The narrow guidelines for the Building Better Regions Fund ('BBRF'), Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program ('LRCIP'), and Roads to Recovery Program ('RAR') lock out a large number of high-potential shovel-ready local and regional infrastructure projects that, if capitalised upon now, could be part of an immediate and effective stimulus-gear coronavirus recovery package.

For example, round 4 of the BBRF was only available to drought-affected councils. While the need in drought-affected communities is unquestionable, this meant that many of Indi's councils were ineligible to receive a crucial source of funding for infrastructure and community investment. Similarly, the emphasis of the LRCIP and RAR programs on roads limits access to funding for certain types of critical regional transport and connectivity infrastructure.

In the electorate of Indi alone, there is over \$403.46 million worth of shovel-ready projects that have not been put forward or approved under existing infrastructure funding schemes.

**The Government should expand the eligibility and size of existing regional infrastructure investment funds, or create entirely new funds with broader guidelines, with the aim of funding more shovel-ready stimulus projects like the [selection](#) below.**



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Table 2: Indi shovel-ready infrastructure projects

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>Wangaratta Sports, Aquatic and Events Precinct</b>	The project will integrate and sustainably redevelop the precinct to facilitate the expansion and renewal of the facilities and infrastructure which currently includes indoor and outdoor facilities, netball courts, indoor and outdoor football ovals, tennis, event space, club rooms and facilities for over 20 community groups, and the local showgrounds. It will deliver amenities, programs and services that respond to emerging trends and demands and focus on ensuring sustainable development for the future.	\$20 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
<b>Benalla-Whitfield Road Upgrade</b>	This project will see the last remaining 6km of gravel upgraded and sealed. This section of road is the last unsealed designated collector road within the Municipality. The project will support the growing tourism sector within the valley, providing crucial links for people moving throughout the region. Importantly, the project will improve the safety and accessibility for all people moving throughout the Valley. This is a very vulnerable area to bushfire which sharpens the need to complete the sealing. The terrain of the area adds to the significance of these roads.	\$7 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
<b>LOGIC Intermodal Enabling Road Infrastructure</b>	LOGIC is the Wodonga Council's forward-looking industrial estate, established approximately 14 years ago. It has realised approximately \$25 million in land sales, more than \$900,000 per annum in municipal rates and more than 615 jobs. The Wodonga Council is in the process of installing a \$5million Gas Gate in the estate, which is likely to strongly encourage continued growth. This intermodal facility benefits from an SCT rail terminal linked to future inland rail and a potential inland port for the North East of Victoria. The anticipated growth will increase demand on road and other Infrastructure (services). The Council is seeking \$20 million financial support to commence construction of the required enabling road infrastructure and services connections within the estate. These works are largely designed and ready to proceed to tender within weeks with construction able to commence in now, and completed within 12 months.	\$20 million





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<p><b>Connecting Telecommunications link between the North East and Gippsland</b></p>	<p>Connecting the fibre optic cable network across the Great Dividing Range will improve the resilience of telecommunications service from Harrietville to Dinner Plain, including Mount Hotham. If there is a break in the fibre optic cable east of Harrietville, telecommunication services are lost east from that point.</p>	<p>\$5 million</p>
<p><b>Baranduda Fields Access Roads and Parking Areas</b></p>	<p>This project will see the provision of additional access and circulation roads and car parking areas for the new Baranduda Fields – a regional sporting facility. The additional funding will see early works related to Stage 2 commence, providing improved vehicle access/egress and circulation and additional car parking for large sporting events.</p>	<p>\$4 million</p>
<p><b>Wangaratta Aerodrome and Precinct</b></p>	<p>The Wangaratta Aerodrome supports emergency services, charter services, recreational aviation, pilot training, and heritage conservation and tourism. The revitalisation of the aerodrome set out in the Wangaratta Aerodrome Master Plan will ensure it meets commercial, recreational and emergency services needs (including air ambulance, police and air firefighting) for the next 20 years. This new development, when combined with the current employment on site, would lead to an aviation cluster with a total of 40 direct jobs and a further 6 indirect jobs by 2024. Infrastructure upgrades, works and the extension of aprons and taxiways will cost approximately \$14 million and could be co-funded by the State Government and private investors.</p>	<p>\$28.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Mansfield Lords Pavilion</b></p>	<p>This project will provide a new multi-purpose community hub with female friendly change facilities, landscaping and civil works to formalise car parking and improve pedestrian connectivity and accessibility. The Lords Pavilion project provides critical infrastructure, creates a practical and sensitive space for emerging mixed gender sporting codes, provides employment opportunity and income generation through venue/event hire and community cohesion and support.</p>	<p>\$3.7 million</p>
<p><b>Alexandra Streetscape Project</b></p>	<p>The Town of Alexandra, the largest town in the Murrindindi Shire and the administrative centre is the community hub of shops and other businesses. The streetscape itself is very tired and unattractive which, given the importance of this town to the Visitor Economy, needs addressing.</p>	<p>\$3.4 million</p>



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<p><b>Marysville Regeneration</b></p>	<p>Following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires the town of Marysville was redeveloped, however these works were not fully finished. Council has contributed significant funds in the 2019/20 financial year, however to complete these works support is required to the value of \$122,875. This will ensure that this beautiful tourist town, which has been severely impacted by COVID-19 and closure of the nearby snow resort can be ready to welcome back visitors. This project can be completed very quickly.</p>	<p>\$0.12 million</p>
<p><b>Lake Eildon Masterplan - Sewerage System Gough's Bay</b></p>	<p>The lack of township sewerage system and reticulated water prohibits investment in Goughs Bay and contributes to pollution in Lake Eildon. This project will deliver 18 kilometres of pipeline connecting Goughs Bay with Mansfield. Investment in sewerage infrastructure will help build the visitor nodes of Goughs Bay and Jerusalem Creek into key visitor destinations, by unlocking development potential through the removal of infrastructure barriers that can often deter potential investors, as well as improving environmental outcomes.</p>	<p>\$15.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Hanson Street Redevelopment of Residential Area Streetscape in Corryong</b></p>	<p>This project will improve safety with the introduction of cycle lanes and improved parking opportunities. The works will also address ongoing drainage issues by removing unsuitable trees which are causing issues with existing infrastructure. The kerb will be replaced along both sides of the street and footpath improvements implemented in certain areas, and redevelopment of centre median.</p>	<p>\$2.9 million <i>Co-fund project</i></p>

### 1.3 Critical Bushfire Resilience and Recovery Projects

The devastating summer bushfires and subsequent Royal Commission have exposed failures in our existing critical infrastructure.

**The Government should immediately fund the local bushfire resilience geared projects below, either through amendments to existing schemes such as the Regional Connectivity Program, or by ensuring existing bushfire recovery and resilience funding schemes are fully capitalised and implemented in a transparent, equitable and evidence-based manner.**

These and numerous other resilience projects are critical ahead of future bushfire seasons and were included in my previous budget submission in March 2020.



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***Allocate an additional \$20 million to the Round 6 Mobile Black Spot Program or Regional Connectivity Program dedicated to applicants from high-risk bushfire communities***

While much has been done over recent years to improve telecommunications access in North East Victoria, when disaster such as bushfires strike communities are often let down by mobile phone black spots, preventing them from accessing localised information through emergency services apps. An increasing reliance on telecommunications during emergencies, such as evacuation notices being sent via SMS, highlights the ongoing fragility of the services. North East Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone regions in the world and complete mobile phone coverage is essential.

Existing telecommunications coverage throughout regional Australia must be improved to ensure communities can reliably access communications in both every day and emergency situations. An additional \$20 million (bringing the Mobile Black Spot Program to \$100 million or building in a special category for high risk bushfire communities into the recently opened Regional Connectivity Program) will ensure those communities most at risk of communications outages during bushfires can remain safe and connected.

***Invest \$15 million to build a renewable energy microgrid in Corryong***

The recent bushfires have highlighted the vulnerability of existing power infrastructure in Indi. This was most notably demonstrated by the destruction of dozens of kilometres of main power lines between Tallangatta and Corryong which left Upper Murray communities without power and dependant on generator power a month after the fires. The outage of the ABC transmitter for Corryong, with many unable to tune in to emergency broadcasts, demonstrated the precarious nature of reliance on mains power.

A potential solution is the development of renewable energy microgrids which would allow communities to be self-sustainable in emergency situations. AusNet and Mondo applied for \$3 million for a Corryong microgrid feasibility study under the *Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund – Microgrids 2019-20* but were ultimately unsuccessful despite a convincing business case. This Corryong microgrid could be built for a total of \$15 million, requiring \$12 million in addition to the \$3 million requested for the feasibility study.

The Corryong micro-grid project should be funded as a priority project to stimulate the economy and build the resilience of power supply and telecommunications in the Upper Murray region.



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### ***Contribute to a new Incident Control Centre at Ovens***

The Ovens Valley features the major population centres of Myrtleford and Bright. During the bushfires the Ovens Incident Control Centre coordinated the response to the Abbeyard Fire which threatened Mount Buffalo. A number of previously large regional fires have been coordinated from this centre, with as many as 90 responders stationed there during the January fires. However, the facility was built in the 1950s as a tobacco research centre and is not fit for purpose, and is long overdue for a replacement.

### ***Invest \$275,000 in an automated weather station at Corryong***

As Corryong does not have an automated weather station ('AWS') it must rely on the Khancoban weather station, which is 30km away and does not reflect Corryong weather conditions. The accurate recording of local weather conditions is vital for bushfire response and suppression, air transport of critically ill patients, search and rescue activities, and stock and crop management and domestic aircraft. My office has advocated in support of the AWS alongside Towong Shire Council, the District 24 Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police – Corryong and the Man from Snowy River Festival. The Bureau of Meteorology estimates the AWS will cost \$222,000. I therefore encourage you to make \$275,000 available to fund site leasing and preparation, construction of the AWS and five years of operating costs.

### ***Guarantee equity and accessibility in any additional bushfire recovery spending***

The Government should commit to ensuring any additional bushfire recovery measures announced in this special budget through the National Bushfire Recovery Agency or otherwise are locally-led and based on fair, proportionate and defensible calculations of impact, need and risk. The Government should also give an iron-clad guarantee to those from bushfire-affected communities that there will be common sense adjustments to back-dated eligibility assessments for JobKeeper to February 2020 through the Commissioner of Taxation given the economic devastation bushfire-affected communities found themselves in at the time.



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### 2.0 Electorate-wide Policy-based Budget Priorities

#### 2.1 Climate and Energy

##### ***Support the implementation of the Local Power Plan with funding of \$467m over 10 years***

Under the Government’s current policy settings, regional Australia is set to experience a boom in renewable energy development over the coming decades. To ensure that everyday regional communities benefit from this investment boom, we must empower regional communities to own and develop their own renewable projects. This is called community energy. Over recent months I have developed a comprehensive policy framework to accelerate community-owned renewable energy across regional Australia - the *Local Power Plan*.

The *Local Power Plan* would:

- Establish 50 local power hubs across regional Australia and create a \$312m fund to support the development of community-owned projects;
- Implement a scheme to underwrite community investments in mid-scale renewable energy projects; and,
- Create a new requirement for developers of large-scale renewable energy projects to offer 20% equity to the local community.

As costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office, the *Local Power Plan* would require a \$467m investment over ten years, costing \$110m to the underlying cash balance out to 2022-23. Funding the *Plan* would be a modest financial cost, but a significant and meaningful investment in the future of regional Australia at precisely the moment when we most need to invest.

##### ***Support feasibility studies for new hydro-electric capacity in Indi***

The Hume Region, which encompasses nearly all of Indi, has 13 times more pumped hydro storage potential than is required to support a 100% percent renewable grid for all of Australia. Increasing funding for Clean Energy Finance Corporation and Australian Renewable Energy Agency would enable feasibility studies to be conducted into pumped hydro in my electorate – a technology that is critical in providing storage for the increased uptake of solar and wind renewable energy.



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### 2.2 Local government

***Increase Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue to rural and regional local governments, including through innovative stimulus-g geared schemes***

Commonwealth Government assistance to local councils through the Financial Assistance Grants program was last at 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (CTR) in 1996. I urge you to return Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1% of CTR to ensure regional councils can continue to provide adequate infrastructure and services programs. This could be through designated stimulus-driving initiatives where local governments are well-placed to lead immediate implementation, such as funding for a rural road and infrastructure maintenance program. This would be a timely and efficient use of public expenditure and provide a much-needed investment injection, as well as generate employment opportunities for regional and rural communities that position local councils as a critical player in the solution to the current economic situation.

### 2.3 Rural Health and Aged Care

***Fund more Home Care Packages to allow people to age safely in place***

The fragility of the residential aged care sector has been exposed by the coronavirus pandemic. The case for funding Home Care Packages has never been stronger. Supporting older Australians to age in place keeps them safe, healthy and independent, and out of residential care facilities for longer. As at 30 March 2020, there were 103,599 older people waiting for a Home Care Package, and the average wait list remains over 12 months for Level 2, 3 and 4 packages. One constituent waited over two years for her husband's Level 4 package. This is unacceptable. The Government should approve more Home Care Packages to reduce the wait list, particularly for people waiting for Level 3 and 4 packages, and ensure the almost \$1 billion of unspent funds is repurposed quickly to reduce harm to both providers and older Australians waiting for support to have a better quality of life.

***Implement the recommendations of the NDIS Tune Review and invest in a skilled NDIS workforce for rural and regional Australia***

Last year's Tune Review recommended streamlining the experience of creating and using NDIS plans. I call on the Government to implement all of the Tune Review recommendations. This could be funded through reinvestment of the \$4 billion of savings from NDIS underutilisation in 2018-19. Likewise, this reinvestment could develop the much-needed workforce required to meet the significant expansion of the NDIS, with estimates of an additional 90,000 new workers in the disability sector



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### ***Implement the recommendations of the Multi-Purpose Services Review and increase the Flexible Care Subsidy***

The Multi-Purpose Service Program Review (MPS Review) made 13 recommendations to strengthen the MPS program. The Government should implement these as soon as possible to remove barriers to high-quality, sustainable and efficient aged care in regional and remote areas, notably:

- Recommendation 9: Review the Commonwealth’s approach to the funding of accommodation and other aged care infrastructure in MPS with the aim of increasing the number of co-located health and aged care services and the provision of facilities which meet contemporary standards and expectations
- Recommendation 10: Review all Commonwealth rural and remote health, aged care and related programs (operational and capital) that currently exclude MPS, assessing the rationale for that exclusion and assuming future inclusion of the MPS unless there is a public net benefit in retaining the current policy.

Corryong Health and Alpine Health fall under a Multi-Purpose Service Funding Agreement and provide integrated health and aged care services to the frail aged in regional and remote communities. However, the Commonwealth’s contribution to these services, the Flexible Care Subsidy, has been frozen and has not kept pace with increasing resident acuity or complexity in regional settings, resulting in a funding shortfall that threatens quality of care and service viability. Increasing the Flexible Care Subsidy will allow these services to provide appropriate care for complex needs patients.

### ***Co-fund up to \$135 million for priority projects at Albury Wodonga Health***

There are a number of service and infrastructure upgrade projects in the pipeline at Albury Wodonga Health ranging from proof of concept through to shovel ready, listed below. The Government is encouraged to work in collaboration with state and local counterparts to realise the vision of these projects and usher in a new masterplan for the precinct in 2020-21.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	CTH REQUEST
<b>Women and Children's Wing, Albury Wodonga Health</b>	A new, purpose-built women’s and children’s unit will be constructed on the site of the Albury campus of Albury Wodonga Health. The unit will provide the full range of services to support childbirth including antenatal clinics, outpatient services, birthing suites, dedicated theatre suite, inpatient wards, special care nursery and postnatal care clinics. Paediatric services will be co-located allowing specialist staff to support children who require hospital care or outpatient services including oncology and therapy services.	\$60 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>



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<p><b>Community Services Hub</b></p>	<p>The project will provide easy access for community members to a range of AWH services. It will deliver purpose built infrastructure with improved ICT for the following programs: Community mental health; Dental health; Child and family health; Hospital avoidance programs; Hospital in the home, post-acute care and community nursing; Violence and abuse prevention and support services; Pain management program.</p>	<p>\$30 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Research and Education Hub into health impacts of natural disasters</b></p>	<p>A new, purpose-built research and education centre will be developed on the site of, or adjacent to the Albury campus of Albury Wodonga Health, consistent with the Albury City Council's plans to develop a health precinct in the area. The centre will provide under-graduate and post-graduate student facilities including a simulation centre to support clinical training. AWH will work in partnership with the university sector to establish the Australian Rural and Regional Natural Disaster Health Research Institute to focus on the health impacts of natural disasters including drought, bushfire and pandemic and to develop new strategies in response.</p>	<p>\$40 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Negative Pressure Rooms</b></p>	<p>Negative pressure rooms allow patients with infectious diseases to be cared for in a safe environment that minimises risk of transfer of airborne pathogens to staff, other patients or visitors. The Albury campus of AWH is its major acute site but at present there are no negative pressure rooms on site. This project would construct 2 rooms.</p>	<p>\$0.5 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Brain and Mind Centre Albury - Phase 2</b></p>	<p>The new Brain and Mind centre opened in early 2020 and is providing community mental health and drug and alcohol services from a modern, purpose-built facility. Phase 2 would see the development of the second floor of the building to accommodate 38 additional workspaces, a meeting room, storage and bathroom facilities to support the colocation of a range of private and NFP providers. This will create a one-stop shop for consumers and integrated care opportunities. Phase 2 is well progressed.</p>	<p>\$0.35 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>
<p><b>Mobile reception coverage at Albury campus</b></p>	<p>The AWH Mobile service upgrade project will resolve poor mobile reception at Albury Hospital. This project will address this and ensure ongoing mobile coverage in the areas needed most; the ED, ICU and Medical Wards. It will allow AWH to introduce its virtual visitor program to the Albury campus and will support clinicians to access and share patient information.</p>	<p>\$0.6 million <i>Open to co-fund</i></p>





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<b>Pharmacy auto dispensing cabinets</b>	AWH is introducing Pharmacy Auto Dispensing Cabinets to deliver better operational services through the digitisation of drug dispensing via automated dispensing cabinets. These cabinets increase safety and security for medication management and are considered best practice in modern pharmacy.	\$0.8 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
<b>AWH Master Plan</b>	AWH will complete a new master plan in 2020/21 to determine the infrastructure required to deliver its current and planned services and to identify the best location for these services.	\$0.2 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>
<b>Mechanical services upgrade</b>	Foundation works need to occur across Wodonga campus to allow its mechanical services including air-conditioning, heating, electrical, fire and hydraulics to support new facilities including the \$5 million community hub and specialist clinics building and the proposed \$12million mental health rehabilitation unit.	\$3 million <i>Open to co-fund</i>

### 2.4 Education

#### ***Fund priority actions in the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy***

The Napthine Review has provided a blueprint for improving educational outcomes for rural students and has the backing of regional universities in my electorate such as La Trobe University and Charles Sturt University. I urge you to commit funding to the actions in the Review in the Budget, starting with demand-driven funding for Commonwealth-supported bachelor-level university places for domestic students studying at regional and remote campuses and for all Indigenous students from RRR areas, and the regional-focus of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) scheme.

#### ***Include Regional Universities in the revised JobKeeper scheme***

While welcome, the Higher Education Relief Package is insufficient to respond to the financial impacts experienced by regional universities as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and recurrent lockdowns. The exclusion of universities from the JobKeeper scheme does not take into consideration the unique differences between metropolitan and regional universities – particularly multi-campus universities who use income generated in metropolitan bases to fund critical access to academic and vocational education courses in regional centres which are now being cut at an alarming rate. Universities Australia warn in excess of 21,000 jobs will disappear from the high education sector, with a projected revenue decline of between \$3 billion and \$4.6 billion under the Higher Education Relief Package. I call on the government to include Charles Sturt, La Trobe and other regional universities in its revised and extended JobKeeper scheme.



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***Conduct a second Local Schools Community Fund round and increase funding to rural, regional and remote electorates with higher numbers of schools***

The first Local Schools Community Fund identified a huge demand for funding for small capital projects in my electorate. As a large regional electorate covering 29,187km<sup>2</sup> Indi has 125 schools, more than the average outer regional electorate and more than double the national average. The \$200,000 funding in this round did not come close to meeting the \$1.1 million worth of applications. A second round will help address need for vital services and infrastructure such as air-conditioning, computer or ICT facilities and counselling or youth mental health support. A tiered funding model, where electorates with higher numbers of schools receive more funding, should be considered.

***Increase the maximum Child Care Subsidy from 85% to 95% to ensure universal access to affordable childcare and boost employment***

Childcare providers in Indi – as in many parts of regional and metropolitan Australia – have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many providers in Indi are council-run, which meant they were excluded from JobKeeper and severely disadvantaged by the Relief Package introduced by the Government in April. Many providers nationally are now facing reduced attendance rates, and many parents who have lost work are now being priced out of childcare. This not only affects childhood education outcomes but is a significant drag on employment at precisely the worst time.

I have costed a policy with the Parliamentary Budget Office that would increase the maximum Child Care Subsidy from 85% to 95% at a cost of around \$1 billion a year over the forward estimates. This would be an important economic reform to support jobs in our recovery, and would support women disproportionately affected by job losses as a result of this pandemic to enter the labour force.

***Invest \$2 million capital funding for Mansfield's only kindergarten***

Mansfield has an acute need for investment in its single kindergarten. The current infrastructure is over 35 years old and is no longer fit for purpose, and there is a wait list of children. The Victorian Government has provided funding for stage one in the master plan redevelopment, but \$2 million is required to undertake the whole project. The community has waited many years for investment in this vital service to improve educational outcomes.



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### ***Invest \$27.96 million in the Mansfield Autism Statewide Service***

Mansfield Autism Statewide Services has supported Victorian families living with autism for 50 years and are ‘bursting at the seams’. Demand for services at MASS far outstrips supply. Their \$30 million masterplan for the recently purchased 100 acres in Mansfield will future proof the service. MASS requires capital expenditure assistance to realise their vision including a new term and day school, family camp, training and student residential facilities, equine therapy and outdoor recreation facilities including a pool, sport hub, walking and bike tracks along with sensory gardens and develop a seed propagation business. Direct and indirect benefits from each dollar invested into the service is estimated at \$4.83 across a range of portfolios from employment to social services and education.

## **2.5 Trains**

### ***Ensure timely delivery and ongoing maintenance of the North East Rail Line upgrade***

The adequacy of passenger rail services between Albury and Melbourne is a significant issue for residents and businesses within the region. The Government has committed \$235 million to this upgrade with completion scheduled in mid-2021, and I call upon the Government to ensure that the project delivers the upgrade to the standard and within the timeframes promised, and guarantee sufficient maintenance funding is committed to maintain the line to the upgraded standard.

### ***Fund amenity and accessibility upgrades in regional railway precincts as part of Inland Rail***

The Inland Rail runs through the townships of Wodonga, Wangaratta, Glenrowan, Benalla and Euroa. This project provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform the amenity and accessibility of railway precincts in these town centres, delivering a positive legacy for tourism, population growth and community pride. Communities and local councils have worked together to identify realistic and cost-effective design solutions with support from the Australian Rail Track Corporation. Yet the ability to seize these opportunities is restricted by the project’s budget, scope and time restraints. With the fast-tracking of the Inland Rail through the JobMaker program and the early delivery of construction milestones for the North East Rail Line upgrade, surplus and/or additional funding should be allocated specifically to amenity and accessibility works to deliver precincts that our local communities can be proud of.



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### 2.6 Agriculture

#### *Invest in research into sustainable and regenerative agriculture*

As noted in MYEFO, the recent drought has hurt the agriculture industry with farm GDP detracting from growth in 2018-19 and is expected to detract again in 2019-20. Prioritising funding for agricultural adaptation research and translation can equip farmers with the know-how to grow their business and strengthen their resilience. This can include eco-services remuneration for farmers undertaking vital biodiversity work and carbon sequestration.

#### *Support regional producers to capitalise on growth in the agriculture and tourism sectors*

This support includes intensive programs for producers, manufacturers and service providers about best business practices, succession planning, exporting, marketing and branding, research and development, sales, and value-adding. These programs will support local growers and producers to expand their offering to both the domestic and international markets, creating long term job security and drive job creation within our region. \$500,000 to \$1 million needs to be spent each year on this program. Funding partners can include the Commonwealth Government, State Government departments, trade and investment agencies and private enterprise.