

Regional Deal Policy Statement

Regional Victoria is missing out. While billions are being spent on metropolitan rail and road projects, we don't have enough money flowing to our region for the infrastructure we need to grow. With government support, Benambra could become a thriving regional centre, with significant economic opportunities for its residents, and infrastructure that delivers easy access to major city centres. For Benambra to thrive we need incentives to encourage new business, incentives to support steady and strategic population growth, and we need funding for the infrastructure to support our growing population. I will focus on delivering a Regional Deal for Benambra, a strategic plan to support the development of Benambra into the most vibrant and prosperous regional centre in Victoria.

A Regional Deal for Growth

We need to ensure that Benambra has strategic and steady population growth. In particular, we need to attract young people of working age, to ensure that Benambra is an economic lifter, and not an economic leaner. We need to be able to entice skilled workers to the country, to fill the existing skills and labour force shortages that are restricting our economic growth. I will work to ensure Benambra has the ongoing strategic population growth necessary to develop into a regional economic leader.

I will advocate for a clear state taxation incentive program to encourage movement to rural Victoria. I will fight for a Victorian Government funded Regional First Home Buyers Grant, and a two year rate freeze for first home buyers in key rural and regional local government areas. I will advocate for the Rural Councils Victoria plan to establish a 'Rural Victorian Employment Service', a service that would connect city populations with job opportunities in rural Victoria.

A regional deal for business

There are too many empty shop fronts in all of Benambra's main streets. We need a better deal for business, a set of incentives to ease the burden, and to support new enterprise development in our region. I will fight for the sensible incentives needed for our local business sector to thrive.

I know a good idea when I see one. We do need to lower the payroll tax for rural and regional businesses. I will support proposed changes to the payroll tax that would lower the rate from 2.5 per cent to 1 per cent for eligible businesses in rural and regional Victoria. I will also advocate for a set of changes to vehicle registration that eases the tax burden for rural and regional business.

I will work for a targeted small scale grants program to make it easier for rural small business to get the support they need. I will also fight for the development of a Victorian Government grant program that supports established businesses to move operations to rural and regional Victoria.

A regional deal for Infrastructure

Only 7% of State capital expenditure is spent on projects in rural Victoria. It is clear that the country needs a better deal on infrastructure spending. The lack of dedicated funding shows that country Victorians do not have a clear voice speaking in cabinet on their behalf. For that reason, I am advocating for a Minister for Rural Communities that will ensure a strong rural voice at the cabinet table.

JENNY O'CONNOR

I will fight for the development of key infrastructure funds put forward by Rural Councils Victoria, including a Rural Roads Support Fund (\$200 million over four years). I will also fight for the development of a Liveable Rural Communities Fund, an infrastructure fund dedicated to funding rural and regional infrastructure projects (\$100 million over four years). I will fight for the Government to instate a Minister for Rural Victoria and associated government portfolio, to advocate on behalf of rural Victorians.