

The North-Eastern Metro Bugle

SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDITION FROM YOUR LABOR MEMBER FOR THE NORTH-EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION, SONJA TERPSTRA MP



Power To The People – Reviving The SEC

The Andrews Labor Government is driving down energy bills and emissions by reviving the State Electricity Commission (SEC) – delivering government-owned renewable energy to drive down power bills and put electricity back in the hands of Victorians.

The Labor Government is delivering public ownership of energy resources by reviving the SEC as an active energy market participant to build new renewable energy projects – and the Governor in Council has declared the SEC a reorganising body under the State Owned Enterprises Act.

The Government has named Chris Miller as Interim Chief Executive Officer of the SEC, who is working with a special SEC Expert Advisory Panel to revive the Commission under the responsibility of the Minister.

John Bradley, Secretary of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and an energy expert in his own right, will chair the Panel.

The Panel will include: On behalf of all Victorians, two shares in the SEC will be held by the Treasurer and Premier as a fully state-owned energy company.

The SEC will become an energy market proponent under the Labor Government's 10-year plan to deliver cleaner, cheaper energy, with all profits invested back into the energy system – making sure it's the Victorian public, not offshore coal companies, who enjoy the returns.

The Government will hold a controlling interest in renewable generation and storage projects, replacing coal and benefitting every Victorian.

Bringing back the SEC will speed up Victoria's transition to 95% renewable energy generation by 2035, and help reach the target of net zero emissions by 2045 – creating 59,000 jobs in the renewable energy sector.

The SEC will invest an initial \$1 billion towards delivering 4.5 gigawatts of power through new build renewable energy and storage projects – the equivalent capacity of coal-fired power station Loy Yang A, which is set to close in 2035.

The SEC launched the search for its first project or projects in April when it released its Pioneer Investment Mandate, which includes the project criteria for the SEC's first investment – to be announced by the end of this year.

The SEC has been in discussions with potential investors and renewable energy companies – the next step is to open a Registration of Interest process, which will invite potential market participants to identify suitable renewable energy generation and storage projects across Victoria.

The successful project must be in Victoria and contribute to the SEC's objectives of accelerating the transition away from coal. It will supply reliable and affordable zero-emissions power to Victorian households, businesses and industries.

The Labor Government will enshrine the SEC in our state's Constitution in 2023 to prevent a future government selling off our energy assets – and protecting thousands of jobs for future generations.

The Labor Government will also deliver a \$424 million energy and training package to help workers upskill, with 6,000 positions for apprentices and trainees.

Since Victoria's energy was privatised, we've experienced a chronic shortage of workers in trades. Our SEC will help find and train the next generation of tradespeople: maintenance workers, electricians – but also welders, painters and mechanics. Highly-qualified, highly-paid workers – working not for profit, but for people.

As part of the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* we're investing \$12 million to develop new VET qualifications, fund a business case for the SEC Centre of Training Excellence and delivering on the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan to map out the jobs needed and prepare the workforce to get those jobs done.

We're also investing \$10 million in a Hydrogen Energy Worker Training Centre, \$6 million for a Wind Worker Training Centre and \$20 million to keep working towards Victoria's world-leading emission reduction target.

The SEC will be at career nights, recruiting the workers of the future – and an investment of \$116 million will open six new cutting-edge Tech Schools, giving students a head-start in a hands-on profession.

To make sure the workers we're training are guaranteed a long-term pipeline of work, we'll institute local content requirements on state-owned and supported renewable energy projects – worth at least \$5 billion by 2035.

To find out more about the SEC and how bringing back the SEC will benefit the residents of the North-Eastern Metro Region, visit vic.gov.au/state-electricity-commission-victoria

WHAT'S IN THE VICTORIAN BUDGET 2023/24

FIND OUT IN OUR SPECIAL BUDGET LIFTOUT INSIDE

Cheaper Bills And Money In Your Pocket: Power Saving Bonus Is Back

Every household in the North-Eastern Metro Region, is eligible to receive \$250 when they access the Victorian Energy Compare website – even those who received payments under previous rounds.

The new round of the \$250 Power Saving Bonus builds on the success of the 2018-20 \$50 Power Saving Bonus program for households, the 2021-22 \$250 Bonus for concession recipients and the recent \$250 Power Saving Bonus round that ran from 1 July 2022 to 23 March 2023 – programs which provided more than 2.6 million bonuses to households across Victoria.

Applications for the payment can be made through the Victorian Energy Compare website, which gives customers access to the best energy offers in their areas – potentially saving hundreds of dollars.

Households needing help to apply can call the Victorian Energy Compare helpline on 1800 000 832 to apply over the phone or be connected by an outreach partner in their community.

The Labor Government is also reducing cost of living pressures through the new Energy Assistance Program, a free service providing energy consumers experiencing hardship with one-on-one assistance.

The Program is a \$3.75 million initiative that will help Victorians struggling with power bills to navigate the energy market, apply for eligible grants and concessions, find and switch to better offers and address billing errors.

For those without internet access, phone and in-person support is available through Community Outreach Partners – including Anglicare Victoria, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Community Information and Support

Victoria, Ethnic Community Council Victoria, Good Shepherd, State Trustees and Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria.

To apply, visit compare.energy.vic.gov.au. To speak to an Energy Assistance Program advocate, call 1800 161 215.



\$250 for every household

If you have difficulties applying for the bonus online, you can apply at a local participating Neighbourhood House.

To find your nearest neighbourhood house, visit <https://www.nhvic.org.au/power-saving-bonus-outreach-program#providers>



Scan the QR code to apply

Andrews Labor Government Leading The Country In Climate Action

The Andrews Labor Government has smashed the state's 2020 emission reduction targets on our path to net zero while driving Victorian families' power bills down.

The Victorian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2020, showed the state's emissions fell to almost 30% below 2005 levels in 2020 – almost doubling the target of a 15 to 20% reduction.

Victoria's emissions dropped almost 6% between 2019 and 2020, with the largest drops found in the electricity sector, with a reduction of 2.2 million tonnes of emissions, and transport – reducing its emissions by 1.9 million tonnes.

In 2020, Victoria saw the third-lowest emissions of any state or territory across the nation, after Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

We've set ambitious renewable energy targets of 65% renewables by 2030 & 95% by 2035.

We have world-leading emissions reduction targets: 75-80% by 2035 and net zero by 2045. With these targets, Victoria's economy will be decarbonising at one of the fastest rates anywhere in the world.

Offshore Wind

Our Offshore Wind Targets are leading the country – bringing online 2GW of Offshore Wind by 2032, 4GW by 2035 and 9GW by 2040.

This will ensure that Victoria is the home of Offshore wind, which has the potential to create thousands of jobs and drive billions of dollars of investment.

Renewable Energy

We have delivered the largest annual increase in renewable generation of any state, ever, with renewable generation growing by 3.6 terawatt hours in 2021.

Our first renewable energy auction to is bringing online at least 800 MW of capacity. Our second renewable energy auction was announced in October with 6 massive new projects around the state, delivering 600MW of new renewable capacity. We'll be using this new energy to help meet our commitment to power the entire government operations with renewable electricity – every police station, school, hospital and metropolitan train.

We're the home of Big Batteries, with the largest big battery in the Southern Hemisphere, and a number of other big batteries spread across our State.

We're also supporting neighbourhood batteries that will store solar power at the local level, providing it back to households in the evenings when they need it.

We have already opened our first battery in Fitzroy North and are investing \$42 million to build 100 more across Victoria.

Through our support for new energy technologies, we've created thousands of jobs, while cutting power bills and slashing our emissions.

Solar Homes, VEU, Gas Substitution – helping reduce energy bills and tackle cost of living

We are also leading the nation in helping reduce the amount of energy we use.

We've helped more than 200,000 Victorians install a power station on their roof, thanks to our landmark Solar Homes program, which is our \$1.3 billion program to help 770,000 households install solar PV, hot water or a battery.

We recently published the Gas Substitution Roadmap. We're the first state to undertake this vital work, which will drive down the cost of living and cut our usage of fossil gas.

The roadmap details our approach to substituting fossil gas to help achieve Victoria's emissions reduction targets through energy efficiency, electrification and increased use of alternative gases such as hydrogen and biogas. It shows the incredible opportunity to cut household bills by moving to electricity, with modelling showing that households can save over \$1200 a year by going all-electric.

The Victorian Energy Upgrade (VEU) program is our flagship energy efficiency program. It has delivered incredible outcomes – helping more than 2 million households and businesses to cut their bills, saving the average household \$120 and the average business \$3700 a year.

The VEU supports more than 2,200 jobs a year across the State – in both metropolitan and regional Victoria.

We're helping make sure people in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region can meet the increased power costs brought about by international conflicts and outages across the country, with our \$250 power saving bonus.

Australia's Largest Wind Farm Is Coming To Victoria



Australia's largest wind farm will soon be under construction in the Golden Plains Shire just 60 kilometres north-west of Geelong. The wind farm is a landmark project supporting Victoria's transition to a clean energy future which will help keep power prices down for residents in the North Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Once complete the wind farm will generate 9 % of Victoria's total electricity demand, enough clean energy to power more than 765,000 homes, equivalent to every home in regional Victoria.

The 1,300 megawatt project will be Australia's largest wind farm and will play a key role in helping meet Victoria's ambitious 95% renewable energy target by 2035 and net zero emissions by 2045.

This wind farm will prevent more than 4.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from being emitted to the atmosphere annually - equivalent to 3% of Victoria's total greenhouse emissions. The project also represents a \$2 billion investment in Victoria creating an estimated 700 jobs during construction and 72 ongoing jobs.

The wind farm will also feature a 300MW battery storage facility, making a significant contribution to the Victorian

Renewable Energy Storage Targets of achieving at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030 and 6.3 gigawatts by 2035.

A Community Reference Group has been established to oversee community engagement on the project and establish a Community Grants Program for not-for-profit community groups.

Victoria's renewable energy targets of 65% clean energy generation by 2030 and 95% by 2035 have created certainty for investors with 73 large-scale onshore wind and solar projects either commissioned or in commissioning, with a combined capacity of more than 5.5 gigawatts.

Achieving Victoria's renewable energy targets is estimated to deliver \$9.5 billion in economic development and 59,000 two-year jobs over the period to 2035.

Victoria is well on its way to achieving its emissions reduction target of net zero by 2045. A recent report published by the Commonwealth highlighted Victoria's emissions declined by 3.8% between 2020 and 2021 – this is 32.3% below 2005 levels.

Empowering Communities And Driving Down Bills With Neighbourhood Batteries

Neighbourhood-scale batteries increase energy stability and enable the grid to support more rooftop solar by storing generated electricity during the day and discharging it back at night.

The Andrews Labor Government is increasing renewable energy storage capacity in the suburbs, accelerating its \$10.9 million neighbourhood batteries program, maximising the broad uptake of rooftop solar to store cheap, clean renewable energy at a local level and deliver it back to its host community.

This will help alleviate solar power export constraints and be able to supply power for up to three hours during peak electricity demand periods.

A third round of the Neighbourhood Battery Initiative has been opened, with up to \$2.3 million in grants available for the development of business cases and implementation of neighbourhood batteries.

The Government launched the first inner-city neighbourhood battery in Australia in Fitzroy North last year with more neighbourhood batteries on the way, including one coming to the Yarra Ranges.

The Government is also investing a further \$42 million to install 100 more neighbourhood batteries across Victoria, tripling the number of homes with access to renewable energy storage.

Victoria's neighbourhood batteries are a vital step towards meeting our nation-leading renewable energy storage targets of 2.6 gigawatts (GW) by 2030 and 6.3 GW by 2035 – enough renewable energy to power around half of Victoria's current homes at their peak energy use and reduce emissions by 75 to 80% by 2035.

For more information about how this will benefit the residents of the North-Eastern Metro Region, visit: energy.vic.gov.au/grants/neighbourhood-battery-initiative

Victorians To Benefit From New Container Deposit Scheme

Australia's most convenient and accessible beverage container recycling scheme will begin on 1 November 2023, as part of the Andrews Labor Government's landmark reforms to the state's waste and recycling sector.

CDS Vic will allow Victorians to return their used drink cans, bottles and cartons for a 10-cent refund. This will reduce Victoria's litter by up to half, create new economic opportunities, generate 645 jobs and turn drink containers into new recycled products.

CDS Vic also offers Victorian charities, community groups, environmental groups, sporting clubs and educational organisations new ways to raise funds. These groups and organisations will be able to receive container donations from the community, run a refund collection point or host a container collection drive.

This will encourage more community participation and education around recycling while ensuring households, local clubs and groups can share in the cash benefits of recycling their used cans, bottles and cartons.

The Network Operators will establish and maintain a network of more than 600 refund collection points across the state, making the scheme accessible to all Victorians.

Within 12 months of the scheme starting, the network operators will be required to have a minimum of one collection point per 14,500 people in metropolitan areas, at least one per town of 750 people in regional areas, and at least one per town of 350 people in remote areas.

CDS Vic is part of the Labor Government's \$515 million investment to transform the state's waste and recycling sector. This includes the new standardised four-stream waste and recycling system, which will help meet our target of diverting 80% of all material away from landfill by 2030.

For more information about the CDS and how this will benefit the residents of the North-Eastern Metro Region, visit vic.gov.au/container-deposit-scheme



Single-Use Plastics Ban To Protect Our Environment

Since 1 February, single-use plastic drinking straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers, cotton bud sticks and expanded polystyrene food and drink containers have been banned from sale and supply in Victoria, creating a cleaner and healthier environment for all Victorians.

Single-use plastics currently make up a third of Victoria's litter, pollute our precious waterways and harm wildlife. These items are often only used for a few minutes, yet generate a significant amount of waste – and can be easily avoided or replaced with reusable alternatives that save plastic, and save families money in the long run.

This builds on the Labor Government's successful ban on plastic shopping bags in 2019, and a \$515 million investment to transform our waste and recycling system and divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030.

These reforms have created thousands of new jobs in recycling and manufacturing, increased our recycling capacity and found end products from our recycled materials. Last year, the Government invested \$1 million towards new technology that will turn hard-to-recycle materials like cartons and coffee cups into sustainable building products.

As part of this transformation, Victoria will move to a standardised four-stream bin system – supporting households to easily sort their waste and recycling to reduce landfill – and have access to a container deposit scheme which will maximise the return of used drink cans, bottles and cartons for recycling.


Since the ban was announced in February 2021, the Government has delivered \$595,000 in grants to 15 pilot sites including catering businesses, universities and aged care facilities to help replace their single-use items with reusable alternatives.

The Reuse Pilots Fund alone, will prevent more than 5 million single-use plastic items ending up in landfills or as litter in our environment each year.


The Government has worked with organisations like the National Retail Association to help thousands of retail and hospitality businesses prepare for the change, with

From 1 February 2023

these single-use plastics are banned in Victoria



Single-use plastic straws & stirrers



Single-use plastic cutlery



Single-use plastic plates



Single-use plastic cotton buds



Expanded polystyrene foodware & cups

Some exemptions apply to specific items.
* People who need single-use plastic straws due to a disability or for a medical need can still buy and use them.

Vic Homeowners Save Thousands With Solar

The Andrews Labor Government's \$1.3 billion Solar Homes Program is helping super-charge the state's solar uptake – and saving households in every corner of the state thousands on their energy bills.

Victorians are embracing a clean energy future, with more than half of all homes in some parts of the state now fitted with solar panels thanks to the Labor Government's program of rebates and no-interest loans significantly reducing upfront installation costs, and cutting households' bills by an average of more than \$1,000.

New data shows that the postcode 3029 (Tarneit, Truganina and part of Hoppers Crossing) is leading the charge in suburban Melbourne with 43% of eligible homes fitted with solar panels.

In the regions, postcode 3631 (Shepparton's northern and eastern areas) has become the state's leading solar city, with more than half of all eligible homes reaping the benefits of solar.

Across the North Eastern Metro Region, many homes have been taking up the offer with 3,478 homes in the Eloyton electorate and 3,593 homes in the Warrandyte electorate having already installed solar panels as part of this program, with more homes approved and awaiting installation.

With Victoria on track to halve emissions by 2030, the Solar Homes program and the subsidies it provides to both new and existing homes is playing a big part in cutting emissions and lowering costs for households.

Eligible households can access a \$1,400 rebate to install solar panels, a further \$1,400 interest free loan, and a further rebate of up to \$1,000 to replace their hot water system, cutting \$3,800 from upfront installation costs.

Since its introduction in 2018 the program has boosted household solar use from 14 to 27% across Victoria. On top of this, volunteer committees of management across the state are saving thousands of dollars on energy costs and slashing emissions by installing solar systems on community buildings.

More than 200 public buildings now have solar systems installed as part of the Labor Government's \$9.2 million Solar on Public Buildings Program- reducing annual CO2 emissions by 2,000 tonnes, with an annual saving of more than \$358,000 on electricity bills for volunteer committees.

Increasing solar power will help Victorians and residents in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region take control of their energy bills and reduce our emissions to meet our targets of 75-80% by 2035, and net zero emissions by 2045.

For more info, and to apply, visit solar.vic.gov.au

Next Step To Developing A Thriving Offshore Wind Industry

The Andrews Labor Government has taken the next step towards delivering a thriving offshore wind energy sector and meeting its nation-leading offshore wind targets.

The Victorian Offshore Wind Energy Implementation Statement 2 sets out how Victoria will leverage industry-led investment in offshore wind for the first tranche of projects that will deliver at least 2 gigawatts (GW) by 2032.

The strategy confirms the location of the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings, which will benefit from \$27 million from the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*. The terminal will support wind construction delivery of up to 1 GW per year, process turbines up to 18 megawatts and service multiple offshore wind developments concurrently.

The Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal will undergo a thorough Environment Effects Statement (EES) allowing the community to make submissions which will be considered before the project is progressed.

A Renewable Energy Supply Chain Hub will also be developed near offshore wind development areas. This infrastructure will kickstart the establishment of new renewable energy supply chain opportunities across Victoria.

Offshore Wind Energy Victoria (OWEV) will engage further with local businesses seeking to participate in the offshore wind energy supply chain about how best to build competitive capability.

Work will also begin on a renewable energy workforce development plan that will identify what skills and training is needed to support the industry, with a specific focus on Gippsland.

The strategy also outlines that VicGrid will lead on the development of transmission infrastructure for offshore wind. It will consider a range of feasible options and is expected to announce the specific transmission connection point locations and route corridors in Gippsland and Portland by the end of the year.

This will ensure the timely delivery of transmission infrastructure to support offshore wind while minimising impacts on local communities, the environment and consumer costs.

OWEV is working towards a formal competitive procurement process for the first tranche of offshore wind energy capacity in 2025. Further information will be shared in Implementation Statement 3 in late 2023.

Victoria will be the home of Australia's first offshore wind farms – a key part of achieving our offshore wind targets of 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040 – and help us deliver an estimated 59,000 jobs as we work towards net zero by 2045.

To help meet our ambitious emissions targets the Government is also reviving the State Electricity Commission, bringing back government owned renewable energy to deliver cheaper and cleaner power for Victorians.

For more information on how this will benefit the residents of the North-Eastern Metro Region, visit [energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/a-clean-energy-future/offshore-wind-energy](https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/a-clean-energy-future/offshore-wind-energy)



Undersea Survey To Kickstart Offshore Wind Revolution

Investigations to test seabed conditions off the Gippsland coast for the proposed Star of the South offshore wind energy project will soon be underway as part of the first ever marine geotechnical campaign in Australia for offshore wind energy.

This was made possible through a \$19.5 million Victorian Government investment towards pre-construction work for Star of the South Offshore Wind Project through the Energy Innovation Fund.

A specialist vessel and crew will spend five weeks at sea collecting soil and rock samples from up to 70 metres beneath the seafloor, with the findings to help design the proposed offshore wind energy farm to suit local seabed conditions.

The study will also collect samples from 22 different locations within the project's 2019 Exploration Licence area.

Victoria will be home to Australia's first offshore wind farm and is leading the nation with its offshore wind



Upskilling Plumbers For Victoria's Clean Energy Boom

To meet Victoria's growing demand for energy efficient technologies, we're upskilling plumbers through a training program in partnership with the Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC) delivering specialised skills in designing and installing energy efficient heat pumps and solar hot water systems.

Around 200 Victorian plumbers and fourth-year plumbing apprentices have registered for the course which will run until November 2023. This comes after a successful pilot in 2021.

This is part of Solar Victoria's \$11 million training and workforce development program, which is aimed at growing Victoria's clean energy workforce and giving them the skills to take advantage of the jobs in the booming renewables sector.

The training is open to all eligible qualified plumbers and 4th year plumbing apprentices are encouraged to enrol.

The number of Victorians who claimed the \$1000 rebate to replace their hot water systems with solar hot water or

energy efficient heat pump systems almost quadrupled in 2022.

It's also faster and easier to apply for a Solar Hot Water Rebate with the launch of a new streamlined digital application portal - improving the experience for customers and stimulate demand.

As part of the move towards cheaper and more energy efficient technology gas hot water systems are no longer funded under the program.

Hot water is the second largest consumer of household energy, switching to solar or a heat pump could save households up to \$400 a year on their electricity bills.

If you're a plumber residing in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, you can find out more information on training courses by visiting [solar.vic.gov.au/upskilling-plumbers](https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/upskilling-plumbers) and to apply for solar hot water rebate visit [solar.vic.gov.au/solar-hot-water-rebate](https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/solar-hot-water-rebate)

Newstead On Its Way To Clean Energy



Community-owned renewable energy projects, driving down energy bills and reducing emissions to combat climate change, are being supported by a \$1.1 million grant from the Labor Government.

The community-led Renewable Newstead Energy Project is a 3-megawatt (MW) solar farm and 5-megawatt-hour (MWh) battery system that will generate enough electricity to transition Newstead to 100% renewable energy.

The community group Newstead 2021 Inc has spearheaded the project, made possible through unprecedented collaboration with Powercor and retailer Flow Power.

With construction set to be complete by July 2023, a retail offer will be made available for Newstead residents through Flow Power, offering power bill reductions of up to 30%. Flow Power will reinvest a portion of profits back into the community for further renewable energy projects.

The Newstead volunteer group overcame significant challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, grid constraints, market changes, weather events, and international supply chain issues to break ground on the project.

The Labor Government has committed a further \$1.15 million to Victorian renewable energy and energy efficiency projects through the latest round of the New Energy Jobs Fund (NEJF). The funding will support 15 new projects, boosting energy security, attracting private investment and creating jobs.

A total of \$20 million has been provided through the NEJF, which was designed to support community-based projects that create long-term sustainable jobs, increase the uptake of renewable energy, slash greenhouse gas emissions and drive innovation in emerging energy technologies.

If you'd like to find out more about how community owned renewable energy projects can benefit people living in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, visit: <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/grants/new-energy-jobs-fund>

Rolling Out Nation-First Recycling Reform

Victorian households in the North-Eastern Metro Region will be able to recycle everything from soft plastics to used pizza boxes in the coming years, as part of the Andrews Labor Government's massive transformation of Victoria's recycling systems.

By making recycling consistent throughout Victoria with four bins – purple for glass, green for food and garden organics, yellow for mixed recyclables and red for household rubbish - the Labor Government is supporting households to easily sort waste and recycling and reduce landfill.

In the coming years, the four bins will be able to recycle soft plastics such as plastic bags and wrappers and soiled food containers, in line community need and the consultation with industry.

The Labor Government have committed \$1 million in funding for a new facility that will turn hard-to-recycle materials like beverage cartons and coffee cups into sustainable building products and \$175,000 for a facility to process oversized green waste into provide organic, carbon rich, soil additives for the farming industry.

The Government's \$114 million in grant investment to improve the waste and recycling sector has unlocked an additional \$354 million in investment since 2015, including \$41 million in Federal funding.

So far, the funding has created 226 jobs with a further 500 jobs expected by 2025 and delivered almost 1,745,000 tonnes of new waste and resource recovery capacity, with a further 870,000 tonnes expected by 2025.

The Government is on-track to divert up to 80% of waste by 2030, due in part to the four bin system, the roll-out of the container deposit scheme and the ban on single use plastics.

These milestones are all part of the Government's landmark \$515 million investment to deliver the biggest transformation and reform of Victoria's waste and recycling system in the state's history.



New Trial Will Transform Green Waste Into Soil



A new program to help reduce carbon emissions by converting household sewage and green waste into biochar, a carbon-rich material made from biomass, is to be trialled in Wangaratta. If successful, the trial could lead to a major new facility and the creation of jobs for the region.

The ground-breaking trial will see biosolids from Wangaratta's wastewater treatment plant mixed with the city's green waste then processed into biochar in Melbourne. The carbon-rich form of charcoal is used in to improve soil health and boost agricultural productivity.

This project stops these valuable resources going to landfill and provides potential for future carbon sequestration and the trade of carbon offsets.

If the Wangaratta waste streams are proven to be suitable during the trial, a local facility will be considered to process large volumes of biochar for possible use on the region's farmland with the potential to generate jobs for the region.

The trial will also inform the planned expansion of Gippsland Water's organics recycling business at Dutson Downs, one of the largest circular economy operations in Victoria.

North East Water, Gippsland Water and the Intelligent Water Network will invest \$160,000 in the first stage of the trial with the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Victoria's water sector is leading the charge towards reaching its target of net zero emissions by 2035 and helping create a thriving circular economy for Victoria.

The outcome of the biomass trial holds real potential for residents in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region should it be extended.

Helping Local Councils To Divert Waste From Landfill

The Andrews Labor Government is helping councils build a cleaner, more sustainable Victoria with \$2 million in funding for new local recycling projects – creating jobs and saving residents money at the same time.

Projects eligible for funding include initiatives that seek to increase the reuse, repurposing and recycling of materials at local or regional scale, helping to meet the Government's target to divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030.

A circular economy keeps materials, products and services in circulation for as long as possible and keeps them out of landfill. So far, more than 50 projects across the state have been supported by \$3.8 million in funding.

Previous projects include a mattress recycling program in Swan Hill, a recycling library in Wyndham where residents can borrow re-used gardening, sporting and camping equipment, a composting facility in Bairnsdale and a food organics collection service for multi-storey buildings in Melbourne.

The projects are estimated to have prevented more than 55,000 tonnes of waste going to landfill and created 60 jobs.

The Labor Government has made a record investment of \$515 million to deliver a once in a generation transformation of our state's waste and recycling system. This includes rolling out a statewide four-stream household waste and recycling system and a Victorian container deposit scheme.

The Government's plan will increase the recycling and reuse of our precious resources while reducing waste and helping us reduce emissions to hit our ambitious net-zero emissions target by 2045. It will also create new jobs by building a sustainable and thriving circular economy.

Successful applicants for the grant program will be announced from July 2023.

Residents in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region can find out more and how diverting waste to landfill can benefit them by visiting [sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-councils-fund-round-3](https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/circular-economy-councils-fund-round-3)



Boosting Businesses And Busting Waste

Businesses across the North-Eastern Metro Region are being helped to avoid waste and create new commercial opportunities for recycled products, with more than \$8 million in funding going to 45 new projects across Victoria to accelerate the state's nation-leading transformation toward a circular economy, creating new local jobs and industries.

Some of the 22 projects by research institutes and businesses supported by the Labor Government's Circular Economy Markets Fund (Materials) fund include a new process to reuse glass from solar panels in construction and a recycled plastic solution for construction structures that significantly reduces the amount of concrete required.

A further nine projects will receive over \$1.5 million to avoid waste and increase materials efficiency through the Circular Economy Business Support Fund, with one recipient introducing a new reusable wine keg service

for events to replace wine bottles, significantly reducing waste.

The Circular Economy Markets Fund (Organics) will provide \$1.87 million to 14 projects that remove barriers and accelerate the adoption of recycled organic products, including developing a market for compost suitable for use on sporting fields that can be blended with turf to nourish Melbourne's sporting grounds and public open spaces.

These grants are part of the Government's landmark \$515 million investment to deliver the biggest transformation and reform of Victoria's waste and recycling system in the state's history, with the goal of diverting 80% of waste from landfill by 2030.

For more information about the funded projects visit [sustainability.vic.gov.au/news/news-articles/funding-victorias-transition-to-a-circular-economy](https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/news/news-articles/funding-victorias-transition-to-a-circular-economy)



Building Energy Resilience To Storms And Bushfires

\$7.5 million is helping to supercharge energy network resilience, protecting households and businesses during future weather extremes.

The funding will go towards crucial back-up power systems in 24 towns hit by major storms in 2021 – including batteries and rooftop solar on community buildings – which will be relief hubs in the event of a prolonged power outage.

The energy systems will provide power to community hubs when damage to the network causes a widespread outage, allowing residents to shower, heat food and charge devices.

In response to the 2021 storms and the threat of future climate-related extreme weather events, the Labor Government studied storm-impacted communities across the state for the best locations for the hubs.

The study looked for energy hubs in Cardinia Shire, Hepburn Shire, Moyne Shire, City of Greater Bendigo, Macedon Ranges Shire, Nillumbik Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Moorabool Shire, Surf Coast Shire, Corangamite

Shire, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Wellington Shire and Yarra Ranges Shire.

The Government identified 24 towns and will now begin to work with energy providers, local governments and emergency services organisations to deliver the new energy solutions.

Work is also underway to secure communities at risks of outages caused by bushfires, after the 2019-20 fires left areas in East Gippsland disconnected from the state's grid. Through the Community Microgrids and Sustainable Energy Program, Victoria is funding new energy-resilient infrastructure with AusNet.

The Labor Government is also investing \$9.8 million to deploy a mix of solar panels, batteries, heat pumps and generators to the three towns – Mallacoota, Omeo and Corryong.

The microgrids will enable provide crucial back-up power in the event of a power outage caused by a bushfire.

Residents in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region can find out more by visiting energy.vic.gov.au

New Air Quality Strategy A Blueprint For Better Air

The Clean air for all Victorians Strategy has been released, Victoria's first overarching plan to address air pollution, setting out clear, sustainable and cost-effective approaches to target air pollution and improve air quality over the next decade.

The strategy identifies practical ways that Victorian households, industry, business and transport can reduce pollution. The strategy also raises awareness about the impact of air pollution on human health and the environment by encouraging Victorians, including residents across the North-Eastern Metro Region, to act through community education programs.

By world standards, air quality in Victoria is generally good. However, some communities experience worse air quality than others.

As part of the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, a new \$15 million grants program will target truck operators who regularly travel through the inner west and provide them with a grant to remove their older, dirtier trucks

off the road and encourage the transition to newer, more emission efficient trucks.

We are also offering \$5 million in grants to local Councils to seal local roads under council management and carrying traffic in or adjacent to industrial areas, reducing airborne dust pollution.

The strategy builds on Victoria's leading actions on climate change, which are delivering co-benefits for air quality. Transitioning to renewable energy sources and zero emission vehicles will reduce key air pollutants as well as helping to achieve our 2030 renewable energy and climate change targets.

It also builds on the Government's actions to modernise and strengthen Victoria's environment protection framework, reduce greenhouse emissions, improve the public transport network and reform the planning framework to continue to improve Victoria's air quality.

To view the strategy, visit: environment.vic.gov.au/sustainability/clean-air-for-all-victorians

Primary School Gardens Program Ready To Bloom



More kids are being encouraged to get their hands dirty in school gardens, with the Victorian Schools Garden Program providing rich outdoor learning experiences for students across the state.

The Labor Government's annual grant to the Victorian Schools Garden Program is increasing, from \$95,000 a year to \$145,000 a year – ensuring the thriving program continues to nurture more primary school students.

The announcement was made at the opening day of the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, where student garden projects and a sustainable scarecrow competition were showcased from schools across the state.

Now in its 46th year, the Victorian Schools Garden Program has provided rewarding outdoor education initiatives to generations of Victorians, with this latest funding representing a major funding boost to a bountiful scheme.

The Department of Education and Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria have worked closely together to cultivate the program and grow its student engagement, with the additional funding to deliver school-based activities and on-site learning at 35 participating primary schools – benefiting an estimated 3,500 students.

The program includes grants to encourage schools to start new gardens or improve existing ones, an awards scheme that recognises and rewards the achievements of students and school communities, and professional development workshops for teachers and volunteers to learn the basics of running a school garden.

The awards and grants programs are open to all Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools.

For more information visit vsqp.org.au

Industry Partnerships Coming Full Circle



The Wollert Community Farm, next to Yarra Valley Water's Aurora Treatment Plant, has a plan for local conservation and is currently working to recycle food waste and utilise recycled water for agricultural purposes.

The Wollert Community Farm and Food Collective is a collaboration between the Whittlesea City Council, Melbourne Polytechnic, Whittlesea Community Connections and Yarra Valley Water. The partnership enables the local community to grow food using recycled water and also offers training and employment opportunities to people who are wanting a career in food and fibre.

This collaborative partnership has facilitated the development of a mixed farming enterprise, which

provides food for distribution into the local emergency relief network and volunteering, hands-on education and employment opportunities in best practice sustainable agriculture systems for peri-urban areas.

It is through partnerships like these that we are able to provide robust education and ever-expanding career opportunities for the future of our state.

Residents in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region who are interested in learning more about the opportunities to can a career in agriculture, horticulture or other career paths in a circular economy, can visit freetafe.vic.gov.au

Supporting Women In Solar

Two female electrical apprentices who found they can use their technical skills in a field that allows them to follow their passion for the environment are doing some incredible work at Total Solar Solutions in Bayswater North.

Madi, a first year electrical apprentice, completed her Year 12 studies, then finished her pre-apprentice course from our Free TAFE list and quickly secured an apprenticeship with Total Solar Solutions giving her a pathway to secure and well paid work, learning while she earns and with no study debt as part of the the Andrews Labor Government's Solar Apprenticeships for Women program.

Total Solar Solutions Australia are a local family-owned business that is located in Bayswater North. Business owner Christine is passionate about supporting women in trades and has been a champion in promoting opportunities for women in the solar industry.

These trailblazing women have taken the first steps to a fulfilling and rewarding career in the renewables sector.



Find out more about Solar Apprenticeships for Women here: solar.vic.gov.au/solar-apprenticeships-women

Construction Begins On Glenrowan Solar Farm

Construction has begun on the Glenrowan Solar Farm, which will generate enough energy to power around 45,000 Australian homes thanks to the Andrews Labor Government's nation-leading renewable energy targets.

The 102-megawatt (MW) Glenrowan solar farm is the first project supported by the second Victorian Renewable Energy Target Auction (VRET2) to begin construction which will support 150 full-time jobs.

Through VRET2, the Government will bring forward six projects which will provide 623 MW of new renewable generation capacity and up to 365 MW and 600 megawatt-hours (MWh) of new battery energy storage.

These will drive new investment, local employment and help meet our goal to source 100% renewable electricity for all Victorian Government operations by 2025.

The program is expected to support 920 direct jobs and attract \$1.48 billion of investment in new renewable energy projects, with strong local content requirements resulting in \$1 billion of this being spent in local supply chains during construction.

These projects are part of the Labor Government's renewable energy target of 95% by 2035 which will create 59,000 clean energy jobs and help us meet net-zero emissions by 2045.

For more information about the Glenrowan Solar Farm, visit energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorian-renewable-energy-and-storage-targets/victorian-renewable-energy-target-auction-vret2

New Solar Farm To Power Melbourne's Essential Water Services

Construction of a new solar farm at Winneke Treatment Plant in Melbourne's north-east has been completed.

The project will help Victoria meets its ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2045 and help the Victorian water sector meet its goal of 100% of their electricity needs supplied from renewable energy sources by 2025.

The Winneke Treatment Plant solar farm boasts 19,000 solar panels, which will generate approximately 12,400 megawatt hours of power each year – the equivalent of powering 2,500 houses annually – and prevent 12,000 tonnes of emissions.

The solar farm will begin operations later this year, with the power it produces to be used by the Winneke Treatment Plant – an essential part of Melbourne's water distribution network and the third largest user of energy in Melbourne Water's infrastructure portfolio. Any excess power will be fed into the grid.

The solar farm spans across 10 hectares and uses the latest technology tracking sensors combined with rotational motors to allow for maximum sun exposure and energy generation year-round.

The solar farm also includes a walking track around the facility, allowing the public to see the solar panels in action.

The Winneke Treatment Plant solar farm is one of a number of projects underway across the water sector to generate renewable energy and reduce emissions, as part of the sectors target of achieving net zero by 2035.

A net zero water sector by 2035 will mean the industry has reduced its annual emissions by almost 900,000 tonnes per year – the equivalent to the annual emissions produced by more than 250,000 cars on Victoria's roads.

Melbourne Water Supply In Healthy Position

Following above-average rainfall and three consecutive La Niña events, Melbourne's water supply for the year ahead is secure.

Based on these storage levels, projected weather patterns, and demand, there is no requirement for a desalination order this year.

The decision follows consultation with retail water corporations Greater Western Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water – and will ensure households don't face additional charges on their water bills in 2023-24.

The Victorian Desalination Plant is critical to managing Victoria's water supply amid a changing climate and a future of volatile weather, hotter temperatures and more severe droughts – giving the state's communities, farmers, industry and tourism confidence in our future water supply.

The plant provides a scalable approach to supplement Greater Melbourne's water supplies and storage to avoid severe water restrictions and better withstand dry years, drought and fires – and meet the needs of a growing population.

Demand from our rainfall-dependent water sources already outstrips supply – Melburnians currently use 50 to 70 gigalitres more water each year than what flows into our storages, and our desalination plant has supplied around 25% of storage capacity since 2016.

The Desalination Plant is part of Victoria's long-term water strategy that positions the state to avoid water shortages and adverse social and economic impacts of water restrictions on households, businesses, and farmers.

Solar Boost Makes Schools Greener

Government schools across the state will be supported to install solar panels to save millions of dollars in energy bills and cut emissions through an Andrews Labor Government program.

Dozens of schools are set to benefit from the latest round of the Greener Government School Buildings (GGSB) program – with \$4.6 million in funding available.

Some 232 schools are currently participating in the GGSB program. A total estimated installed capacity of 9,300 kilowatts across all schools involved in the GGSB program is expected to reduce up to 14,000 tonnes of emissions every year and save more than \$2.5 million on electricity bills for schools per year.

A solar power system is a strategic investment that can pay for itself over several years. This investment program removes the upfront costs of installing a system that may otherwise discourage schools from pursuing this option.

In round two of the GGSB, Bendigo Senior Secondary College received a 99.4kW solar power system, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 160 tonnes a year and saving more than \$50,000 on power bills.

Lara Primary School received a 38.5kW solar power system under the GGSB Round 1, reducing its emissions by more than 51 tonnes per year, and saving more than \$7,400 on power bills from electricity generated onsite.

The GGSB pilot program helped Mill Park Primary School reduce its emissions by more than 38 tonnes via a 24.4kW solar power system that also saved more than \$8,000 on power bills from electricity generated onsite.

This program will help Victoria meet its nation-leading renewable energy and emissions targets of 95% renewable energy by 2035 and net zero by 2045.

Schools can find out more on the Greener Government School Buildings program at schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au



Upskilling Electricians For Victoria's Solar Boom

The Andrews Labor Government is upskilling more electricians and electrical engineers to take advantage of Victoria's solar boom.

Due to strong industry demand, the Labor Government has boosted free solar training with a \$900,000 investment. The funding will support an additional 432 electricians and electrical engineers transition their skills.

The Upskilling for Electricians and Electrical Engineers initiative was launched in March 2022 as part of the Government's \$11 million Growing Our Clean Energy Workforce training and workforce development package.

Since the Government launched the training all the available 150 places were quickly taken up by electrical workers, with the total investment now at \$1.3 million.

The extra funding gives the opportunity for more providers, in more locations, to offer the fully subsidised specialist training – upskilling electrical workers in solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery design and installation.

If you're an electrician residing in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region, you can find out more information on training courses by visiting <https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/training-workforce-development>

Biggest Tree Planting Program For A Major Road Project In Vic

More than 30,000 trees will be planted along North East Link as part of the project design and in local suburbs nearby – with at least 2 trees planted for every 1 removed, and planting has already started.

More than 2000 trees have already been planted at local schools, parks, streets, reserves and sports fields. We've also created more opportunities for more trees to be planted as part of the project design.

Longer tunnels to Watsonia and simpler interchanges have created space for new parklands, wetlands, green bridges and tree planting along new and upgraded walking and cycling paths and upgraded local roads.

Across the entire North East Link Program more than 50 MCGs of open space will be delivered including:

- 5 MCGs of new community parklands and wetlands along a revitalised Banyule Creek at Borlase Reserve in Yallambie
- a new tree-lined boulevard for Greensborough Road with 700 trees and wider, shaded walking and cycling paths
- new wetlands along the Yarra River and Koonung Creek in Bulleen and Balwyn North including a 1800m2 cultural landscape precinct
- a 2 hectare Yarra Link green bridge over Bulleen Road in Bulleen, and
- upgrades to Koonung Creek Reserve in Balwyn North.

Landscaping and tree planting will focus on indigenous trees and vegetation from local regions, including fast growing native species to provide a net gain in tree canopy coverage by 2045 – helping to grow a greener north east.

We'll also increase the number of significant trees and plants while we build North East Link including the Studley Park Gum tree and Matted Flax-lily.

Seeds from Studley Park Gum trees have been collected, grown at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and planted in Yarra River parklands. More than 300 trees have been planted so far, replacing each of up to 52 trees expected to be removed to build North East Link with at least 2.

Matted Flax-lilies have also been carefully moved away from construction areas, ready for planting in new locations. We expect up to 139 Matted Flax-lily plants will need to be moved to build North East Link. More than 450 will be planted – establishing new populations more than 3 times the size. The first Matted Flax-lilies for North East Link were planted in August, 2022 at Cherry Street Reserve, Macleod.

Minimising tree and vegetation removal is a priority for the project and there are strict environmental performance requirements and approvals in place.



We know trees are important to the local community and have worked hard to keep and protect as many trees as possible.

Extending the tunnels further south under Manningham Road in Bulleen has protected trees and open space at Banksia Park.



5000 sqm Green roof for Bulleen Park and Ride

The first part of Melbourne's first dedicated busway Bulleen Park and Ride is now open, seeing more than 1000 buses pass through each week.

The state-of-the-art facility features a massive 5000 square metre green roof with seating and landscaping, secure bike storage with repair station, parking for 370 cars, as well as toilets and Myki facilities.

At Winsor Reserve, Macleod and sports fields along Bulleen Road, we've minimised the area needed for construction to retain community spaces. We're also maximising opportunities for new trees to be planted after construction.

We've established no-go zones to protect sensitive environmental areas including the Yarra River, Banyule Flats, Warringal Parklands, Bolin Bolin Billabong and the River Red Gum in Bulleen.

Extensive environmental surveys, including field studies and digital mapping, are used to determine which trees need to be protected and which trees need to be replaced through new planting.

Where tree removal can't be avoided, we're working with qualified ecologists and arborists to plan and manage how works will take place.

To ensure trees and vegetation are correctly identified – and protected where possible – a rigorous process of fencing, flagging and final review by an expert arborist occurs before works start. Regular inspections are also undertaken by an Independent Environmental Auditor.

We're salvaging and milling reusable timber from trees that need to be removed. We're working with local groups, including councils and schools, to re-use timber from the project for community benefit, such as in playgrounds, parklands and habitat creation and rehabilitation.

More trees for the Croydon Transport Hub

We're building a new Croydon Transport Hub, with new road connections to replace the congested level crossing and roundabout at Coolstore Road, a new rail bridge over the road, and a new Croydon Station.

During the consultation about the project's early concept designs, locals made clear that trees and vegetation are important to the Croydon community. This has been taken into consideration in the landscape planning and design. The new transport hub will feature rejuvenated open space, including extensive landscaping throughout the station precinct.

The construction methods have also been refined to build the new rail bridge, which will mean more than 200 trees can be saved.

As part of the project, we're increasing our earlier commitment to plant more than 60,000 trees, shrubs and grasses to over 70,000. This vegetation will be planted throughout the new station precinct, complementing new walking and cycling paths.

We're harvesting seeds from the existing vegetation which allows us to grow saplings, which will replace the trees that need to be removed. Seed harvesting helps maintain connection to the area and replenish existing species.

The project's native planting design will increase biodiversity in the Croydon area, including the addition of endangered native species to the planting scheme, such as Long-leaved box trees.

Landscaping will take place once construction finishes in 2025, with the level crossing gone, new road connections open and trains running safely along the new rail bridge.

Find out more about the updated designs for the new transport hub at bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/level-crossing-removal-project/projects/coolstore-road-croydon



Zero Emissions Bus Manufacturer Makes Melbourne Home



Electric bus developer Ebusco has chosen Melbourne for its Asia Pacific operational headquarters creating new jobs and supporting the Andrews Labor Government's Climate Change Strategy.

The Dutch company has been producing zero emissions buses since 2012, with more than 450 of its buses operating across seven European countries, including in major cities such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Munich.

Although Ebusco's production takes place overseas, the company is considering future manufacturing opportunities in Victoria and is currently working with Deakin University to develop composite materials and aerospace technologies to make its vehicles.

As part of Victoria's Bus Plan, all new buses from 2025 will be zero emission vehicles. To support this transition, the Labor Government has invested \$20 million in a state-wide trial of zero emission buses.

The Government's Low-Carbon Manufacturing Grant Program will help Victorian manufacturers compete globally for renewable energy components, powering the state's transition to net zero and creating new jobs.

Internships supported by the Government's Digital Jobs for Manufacturing program will help train, support and prepare 300 Victorian workers transition to new jobs that will be created as part of the state's push to net zero.

Powering Victoria's Electric Vehicle Future

The Andrews Labor Government is backing a local electric vehicle charging company to grow its national footprint, while boosting jobs and reducing the state's emissions.

JET Charge is being supported to expand operations at its national headquarters in the Fishermans Bend precinct, creating 73 high-skilled jobs in electronics, engineering and logistics.

Established in Melbourne in 2013, JET Charge is Australia's leading provider of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and technologies.

The project has attracted combined public and private investments worth \$3.3 million, supporting the company to grow its operations in research and development and production.

JET Charge operates across Australia and New Zealand and is the preferred charging infrastructure provider for property developers, energy providers and 24 EV brands, having installed more than 10,000 charging stations across Australia.

As demand for new EVs increases, so does the need for charging infrastructure, creating opportunities for industry leaders like JET Charge and increasing Victoria's competitiveness in a growing sector.

The Labor Government has set an ambitious goal for EVs to make up half of all new light vehicle sales by 2030, helping Victoria halve emissions in the same period.

The plan is powered by the Labor Government's \$100 million Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) Roadmap, with 20,000 subsidies and fast-charging stations across the state.

As part of the ZEV Roadmap, \$1.55 million in grants has been awarded to 14 organisations for EV Charging for Business and Not-for-Profits. The program will install 58 charging stations at 24 organisations across the state in 2023, helping drive down their emissions and cut fuel bills.

Regional Victoria will receive \$727,000 and metropolitan Melbourne will receive \$827,000, with chargers ranging from 7 to 60 kilowatts depending on location, fleet size and frequency of use.

The Labor Government has also announced a new \$3.18 million program to support new Zero Emissions Vehicle Emerging Technologies. The program will support pilots, trials and implementation-ready projects using



innovative EV charging technologies, such as wireless charging and bidirectional, vehicle-to-grid charging.

Other eligible technologies include EV charging in high density areas, off-street parking areas and smart chargers that reduce costs or optimise charging during off-peak periods or maximise rooftop solar.

The roadmap also invested \$5 million for new fast-charging stations across Victoria – ensuring drivers in any Victorian town will be at most one hour away from a charger and as well as infrastructure for local councils and businesses to support their fleets.

To put a new ZEV within reach of more families, the Government has invested \$46 million in the Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV) Subsidy, reducing the upfront cost by \$3,000 and driving the creation of a second-hand market.

These initiatives will play a key role in helping achieve our target of 50% of all new light vehicles sales being zero emissions by 2030 and help Victoria achieve its ambitious emissions reductions targets.

To find out more about the ZEV Emerging Technologies program visit energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/zero-emissions-vehicles

Trial To Introduce Victoria's First Fully Electric Bus Depot

Victoria's first fully electric bus depot will be charging 27 buses in Melbourne's north by early 2024 as part of the Andrews Labor Government's Zero Emissions Bus Trial.

The largest participant in the \$20 million trial, bus operator Ventura, will install 15 charging units to power the electric buses at its converted Ivanhoe depot, with its first 12 electric trial buses in operation from March this year.

By early 2024, the depot's 27 electric buses will be operating on nine routes across the northern suburbs, transporting up to 10,000 people each week including to La Trobe University and Northland Shopping Centre. They will cover more than 1.2 million kilometres over a year.

Works to convert the Ivanhoe depot continue and include the installation of a new transformer on site and 14 chargers. Electrification specialist Zenobē is managing the upgraded grid connection that supports the 14 dual-gun Tritium fast chargers.

The initiative will provide valuable insights into the challenges and issues involved with transitioning an entire bus depot to battery electric bus technology, ahead of other depots being built or converted in coming years.

Six Victorian bus companies have been selected to trial two hydrogen and 50 electric buses across existing routes in Melbourne, Seymour and Traralgon, fostering vital partnerships between bus operators, manufacturers, and energy companies ahead of the state's major transition away from diesel buses.

Achieving zero emissions for buses is critical to Victoria meeting its legislated commitment of net zero emissions by 2050, with the Labor Government pledging that all new buses from 2025 will be zero emissions. A phased approach will enable industry to prepare for the transition of about 4,000 buses to zero emissions.

Creating a greener fleet is part of Victoria's Bus Plan to develop a more popular, modern, and reliable network.

Electric Vehicle Lab Puts Kangan Institute In Driver's Seat

A new purpose-built electric vehicle (EV) laboratory will help bridge the emerging skills gap of specially trained technicians in Australia, thanks to support from the Andrews Labor Government.

The advanced automotive and electrical lab is home to the latest technology in electronic training boards and simulators, new computers and software programs and sophisticated teaching aids. This equipment can simulate almost all variants of EVs, making it flexible and adaptable to current and future markets.

These facilities will improve the learning opportunities of new students and apprentices as well as upskill existing industry technicians to make sure Victorians thrive as soon as they enter the workforce.

Kangan Institute will deliver a wide range of EV-specific accredited courses and skills to give those in the automotive industry the chance to upskill. A new apprenticeship program specialising in EVs will give all Australians the opportunity to train and work in an emerging industry.

This investment, delivered through the \$12 million TAFE Equipment and Facilities Fund, will help Victoria achieve its target for EVs to make up 50% of all new light-vehicle sales by 2030.

The Fund is part of the Labor Government's \$3.5 billion investment to rebuild TAFE and support universities and higher education to ensure Victorians have access to high-quality education and rewarding career pathways.

Free TAFE has saved students around \$325 million in tuition fees since the Labor Government introduced it in 2019 – removing the barriers to training for a great new career for around 125,000 students.

Improving Access To Victoria’s Amazing Coastline

The \$1.1 million Coastal Public Access and Risk Grants program for 2022-23 is investing in safer and improved access to our coastline, to ensure we’re protecting our environment and encouraging more people to get out and enjoy Victoria’s coastline.

The grants will support 16 projects across Victoria and deliver vital safety and access works, including:

- beach access improvements at Ocean Grove, Marengo, Warrnambool, Sandy Point, Seaspray, Phillip Island, Parkdale, Middle Park and Blairgowrie
- safety upgrades to the concrete ramp used by Lorne Pier to Pub for water access by over 5,000 swimmers, by repairing the concrete surface and installing secure non-slip matting and signage
- new signage and safety information to help prevent drownings at Phillip Island Nature Parks beaches
- safety assessments and planning work for future improvements at Corio Bay, Walkerville, Dromana and Whitecliffs

Victoria’s coastline is dynamic and constantly changing and these grants ensure they can adapt and infrastructure can be upgraded to ensure all Victorians, including many in the North-Eastern Metro Region, can continue to access their favourite beaches safely.

Funds are available through this program for projects such as risk assessment and management plans for safer access, repair or replacement of paths, stairways, boardwalks and access ramps, installation and improvement of public safety signage and access barriers as well as viewing platforms and lookouts.

Since 2014, more than \$140 million has been invested into marine and coastal environmental projects to deliver a long-term, strategic approach to build resilience in our marine and coastal areas and adapt Victoria’s coastal areas to climate change.

For more information on the grants and to see full list of grant recipients, visit marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/grants/coastal-public-access-and-risk-grants



Turning Blind Creek Into A Natural Beauty

The restoration of Blind Creek and Lewis Park, at the base of the Dandenong Ranges, is now in full swing as part of the Reimagining Blind Creek project, which received \$2.5 million in funding as part of the Andrews Labor Government’s Integrated Water Management Program.

Reimagining Blind Creek is transforming the existing underground drain and retarding basin at Lewis Park in Wantirna South, significantly improving the waterway and environment for the community to enjoy.

A 1.65km section of Blind Creek is being transformed into three wetlands, two harvesting ponds, a range of paths, a boardwalk and other assets like park benches and steppingstones.

The project will create an open space for community activity and wellbeing and will improve waterway health into Port Phillip Bay and Dandenong Creek.

It will also provide future opportunities to harvest and irrigate local sports ovals with treated stormwater.

Construction started in early 2023, and the main delivery of the works will be staged over three summers to minimise risk of unfavourable wet weather conditions.

The project is a collaboration between the Labor Government, Melbourne Water, Knox City Council, and with Traditional Owners.

It is part of Melbourne Water’s Reimagining Your Creek Program, which transforms stormwater drains and concrete channels into natural waterways and open spaces.

The program has transformed sections of Tarralla Creek in Croydon, Arnolds Creek in Melton West, and an upstream section of Blind Creek in Boronia.

Enhanced Protection For Nature At Wilsons Prom



Wilsons Promontory National Park is one step closer to becoming Victoria’s largest conservation sanctuary, as part of the Andrews Labor Government’s \$23 million Wilsons Prom Revitalisation project.

A 10-kilometre fence will be erected to keep out predators like foxes, feral cats and deer, forming part of a major investment that will improve the protection of native habitat and species, while enhancing visitor experiences at one of Victoria’s most popular destinations.

The fence - to be designed by GHD - will prevent invasive species entering the national park and will aid ongoing conservation programs, which include large-scale invasive species control, large-scale habitat restoration and threatened species recovery programs.

Wilsons Promontory is home to a number of threatened species including the Eastern Bristlebird, Eastern Pygmy-possum, Ground Parrot, Growling Grass Frog, Hooded Plover, New Holland Mouse, Southern Brown Bandicoot and Swamp Skink.

Once complete, the fence will establish a 50,000-hectare protected biodiversity sanctuary, ensuring the safety of the park’s unique and abundant wildlife.

And the good news isn’t only for our native wildlife – with upgrades already underway to the Tidal River visitor precinct, the park’s main hub, and new accommodation options in the park.

A new Telegraph Saddle trail to connect Tidal River and Mount Oberon is also planned, along with an all-abilities track upgrade of the Wildlife Circuit.

These visitor improvements come as Victoria’s tourism industry continues to thrive, with new research confirming that the state continues to rebound strongly – delivering more jobs and supporting businesses across the state.

Parks Victoria will be working with Traditional Owners and specialist consultants throughout the project to ensure natural and cultural values are protected.

The Wilsons Prom Revitalisation project is funded as part of the Andrews Labor Government’s \$633 million Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan, and project is expected to directly generate 54 jobs and add approximately \$11.22 million to the regional economy.

Working To Conserve Victoria’s Unique Biodiversity

Victoria’s threatened species are getting the best chance to thrive through the Nature Fund, a new Andrews Labor Government conservation program.

\$10 million from the Nature Fund will be provided to support 16 projects to create great outcomes for Victoria’s most threatened species.

These projects will deliver significant benefits for Victoria’s biodiversity, and they will be supported with a further \$23 million co-investment from delivery partners.

The projects include improving habitat for critically endangered Major Mitchell’s cockatoos in Wyperfeld National Park, supporting the recovery of the critically endangered Fairy Tern, improving the condition of endangered grasslands in western Victoria, and restoring habitat for the endangered Central Victorian ant-blue butterfly.

The Nature Fund will also back projects that advance the self-determination of Victoria’s First Peoples— with \$1.9 million allocated to six projects led by Aboriginal organisations within the program’s Caring for Country stream.

These projects include supporting the Wurundjeri’s Narrap Rangers to practice and share traditional land management knowledge, and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, partnering with Parks Victoria, to deliver predator control – ultimately protecting the white-footed dunnart and the long-nosed bandicoot

Almost \$14 million has been allocated for a range of programs that will help protect our natural environment, with over \$10 million of the funding allocated to a series of large-scale conservation projects to reduce the impact of pests, predators and invasive weeds to protect and enhance habitat for native and threatened species.

The projects span from Victoria’s far north-west, the Grampians, Gippsland and the Mornington Peninsula and benefit a range of threatened species including the Long-footed Potoroo, southern Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, Giant Burrowing Frog and the Eastern Bristlebird



Boost For Conservation Of Our Icon Species

The ongoing protection of the platypus – one of Australia’s most loved, yet mysterious creatures – has received a boost thanks to Andrews Labor Government funding for a new Australian Platypus Conservation Centre at Zoos Victoria’s Healesville Sanctuary.

The centre will be used by world-leading platypus researchers to conduct biological and behavioural research to help Australia-wide conservation efforts. It will also provide enhanced capacity to treat and care for wild platypus affected by extreme weather emergencies.

The funding follows a \$300,000 Labor Government investment in 2021 to support key platypus habitat site restoration works and long-term planning to ensure the unique monotreme has a healthy future. One of these projects, at Hamilton’s Grange Burn waterway, will feature a new online livestream - Platycam.



We’re also boosting Victoria’s critically endangered Helmeted Honeyeater population, with 20 more birds released into the wild as part of conservation efforts to save the species, which are one of the state’s faunal emblems.

Through the Labor Government and conservation partners’ support, the Helmeted Honeyeater population has risen to 250 in the wild.

The Government has contributed \$6 million since 2018 to the recovery of the bird species and Leadbeater’s Possums via the Faunal Emblems Program – improving the long-term conservation and health of both animals.

The release of captive-bred birds combined with extra feeding in the wild has seen those numbers increase by 200 over the past three decades – one of Victoria’s most significant threatened species success stories. But until recently, this population was restricted to just Yellingbo.



The newly released Helmeted Honeyeaters were hatched at Healesville Sanctuary as part of the Government’s conservation breeding program which began last year with captive-bred birds from Healesville Sanctuary and wild-sourced birds from Yellingbo taken to establish a new Helmeted Honeyeater population in forest near Warburton.

The Government is also injecting more than \$870,000 for 14 projects across the state to support the ongoing protection of icon species including the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby, Eastern Barred Bandicoot, Southern Bent-Wing Bat, Burranan Dolphin and Eltham Copper Butterfly.

The projects include a program to monitor the Bogong Moth across the Victorian Alps to help better target conservation efforts of the endangered insect. The migratory moth is a key food source for the critically endangered Mountain Pygmy Possum and other wildlife.

The Icon Species Program has provided more than \$2.6 million to support 19 of Victoria’s icon species over the past five years.

The Government is also directing \$292,000 to 122 of the state’s hardworking wildlife rehabilitators as part of the Wildlife Rehabilitator Grants Program. Wildlife rehabilitators are critical in caring for injured or displaced native animals. This year’s program includes an extra \$60,000 in support for rehabilitators impacted by the July storms.

The Government is helping to stop the decline of native plants and animals and improve the state’s natural environment, through its Biodiversity 2037 plan and has invested nearly \$500 million towards protecting biodiversity and the natural environment since coming to government in 2014.

Bright Future For Rare Victorian Butterfly

The future of a critically endangered Victorian species of butterfly is looking brighter, and the Andrews Labor Government is encouraging all Victorians to play a role in protecting our precious biodiversity.

A study has found there could be more Golden-rayed Blue Butterflies, a rare butterfly only native to Victoria, in the wild than previously thought.

Surveying the Wimmera region, Zoos Victoria and insect scientist Fabian Douglas have found that the Golden-rayed Blue Butterfly is more resilient than previously thought, with more existing than believed over an area of more than double the previously known range.

Adult butterflies were always seen close to the Creeping Boobialla - a flowering low-growing shrub which spreads over the ground, climbs tree trunks and drapes over other shrubs. The survey supports findings that the butterfly is dependent on the plant, where it lays its eggs to hatch caterpillars.

The Labor Government is appealing to residents of the Wimmera region to plant Creeping Boobialla to boost the Golden-rayed Blue Butterfly’s chances of survival in the wild. All Victorians should plant species native to their local region to allow native butterfly and invertebrate species to thrive.

We know that plant species support native butterfly, just like the Eltham Copper Butterfly, where a new colony was recently discovered in Montmorency. Healthy native plant habitats will help preserve our precious native species for decades to come, right here in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The Golden-rayed Blue Butterfly was believed to be on the brink of extinction due to historical loss of habitat around the salt-lakes where it occurs and ongoing degradation of these remaining areas through weed invasion, drought, and rabbit grazing.

Zoos Victoria plans to support a range of actions aimed at gaining a better understanding of the species and reducing its risk of extinction.

We know how important it is to preserve our flora and fauna, especially the rich diversity of native plants and species that inhabit the corridor along the Yarra in the North-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

New Dog Parks Springing Up Across Victoria



The Andrews Labor Government is delivering 31 new off-leash dog parks across Melbourne and regional Victoria, creating more space for our four-legged friends to run and play.

So far, 28 of the 31 dog parks have been completed across Victoria, in suburbs stretching from Altona to Pakenham and as far as Mildura and Portland.

These parks are creating local jobs during construction and deliver more options for Victorians to spend quality time outdoors with their pets.

In September the updated dog park in Ringwood North was opened. Parkwood Reserve dog park provides residents with further opportunities to utilise a safe and enclosed off-leash space with their furry friends including a rock clamber mound, dry creek bed and digging pit for sensory play. There are also dog education and training items, as well as a jogging track and water/drinking area, plus it is fully fenced and double gated.

These dog parks are delivered in partnership with local council, who received up to \$275,000 from the Labor Government to ensure the new facilities are purpose-built to meet each community’s needs.

The Suburban Parks Program invested \$5 million towards 14 off-leash dog parks across metropolitan Melbourne with an additional 17 off-leash dog parks funded by the \$2.5 million Building Works Stimulus program.

Work is also underway to upgrade 41 parks and 29 pocket parks across Melbourne as part of the Suburban Parks Program - creating up to 6,500 hectares of new parkland, walking trails, bike trails, pocket parks and dog parks – the equivalent of more than 170 Royal Botanic Gardens.

For further information about the dog parks under construction, visit: environment.vic.gov.au/suburban-parks

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More upgraded dog parks have been announced in the latest budget including Lawford Reserve, Doncaster and Stiggants Reserve, Warrandyte.

Protecting Critically Endangered Frog From Predators

The critically endangered Spotted Tree Frog is being protected from non-native fish predators through the removal of invasive fish from a strategic section of stream within the Big River catchment, following the installation of concrete barriers to protect Spotted Tree Frog tadpoles.

As part of the Icon Species funding, the Government has provided \$36,000 to fund the project which supports ongoing Spotted Tree Frog conservation management.

Recreational fishing groups are working with the Spotted Tree Frog Recovery Team to prevent non-native fish from wiping out populations of the frog.

Listed as critically endangered in Victorian and Australia-wide, half of the known Spotted Tree Frog populations

have been lost through non-native fish such as trout, carp and redbfin that eating tadpoles and the lethal fungal disease chytridiomycosis.

The fish barrier reduces the ability of these fish to access the streams where the Spotted Tree Frog still occurs. Now the Spotted Tree Frog will have increased protection through the removal of predatory non-native fish from the sheltered section of stream.

Ash and sediment washed into stream channels from the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires further impacted air and water quality, buried the cobble banks where Spotted Tree Frogs shelter in Victorian and NSW, and filled gaps and crevices between rocks where the frogs lay their eggs.

A Spotted Tree Frog can lay up to 900 eggs in rock crevices beneath the water or on the bottom of a stream. Tadpoles emerge in the stream channel and in stream backwaters, while frogs shelter on cobble banks along the stream.

Zoos Victoria has also established a Spotted Tree Frog captive breeding program, with the goal to produce frogs for reintroduction back to the wild.

Funding from the Government has allowed 13 organisations to work together to successfully repair a mountain stream barrier to now reduce the threat of non-native fish complemented by funding to the Taungurung Land and Waters Council through the Biodiversity Caring for Country funding and Cadbury.

Delivering Certainty For Timber Workers

The Victorian Government is stepping in to deliver certainty for timber workers, sawmill operators and their communities, with an expanded transition support package as part of the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*.

This package removes the uncertainty that has been caused by ongoing court and litigation process and increasingly severe bushfires, with an additional \$200 million in support for workers and their families to transition away from native timber logging earlier than planned – by 1 January 2024.

This brings the Government’s total support for the forestry transition to more than \$875 million, including existing worker support services and investments to support the transition to plantation timber.

In 2019, the Government moved to secure a long-term and sustainable future for Victoria’s forestry industry – and for the Victorian workers and communities who rely on it.

We put forward a plan to support the sector as it transitioned, backing long-term, sustainable jobs and giving local workers confidence about their future.

But since then, native forestry has been hit with increasingly severe bushfires, prolonged legal action and court decisions. There are no alternative timber supply sources available domestically or internationally which can offset the current disruptions to supply to Victorian mills and there are no options for regulatory reform which can prevent further legal injunctions continuing to disrupt native timber harvesting operations.

All of that has drastically cut the timber supply we can actually use. And that’s left workers in complete limbo.

Hundreds of workers, across Victoria, haven’t been able to work a day in recent months. They’ve got no certainty

over their jobs. They don’t even know when they’ll be able to get back to work.

We have been right there with impacted communities, providing support payments to keep workers in their jobs and paid – but the uncertainty has taken a toll on communities, families and mental health.

It simply cannot continue.

Native timber harvesting in state forests will end in 2024 – with existing supports being brought forward and scaled up – which will mean every single timber worker will be directly supported to find a new job.

Forest contractor workers will be secured with contracts for forest management works, enabling them to continue to work in the forests they know so well and contribute to bushfire risk reduction.

The Government’s Free TAFE program will retrain workers, helping them get jobs in growing regional industries like construction, agriculture, transport, and manufacturing through TAFE Gippsland and other key TAFE campuses in timber communities. This will be supported by up to \$8,000 in retraining vouchers for courses inside and outside the TAFE Network.

We’ll continue to back workers and their families with financial and mental health support, by connecting them to specialist mental health service providers in their local area and covering out-of-pocket costs. Industry support payments will also continue as needed until the transition is finalised.

We’re being upfront with the industry – and continuing to deliver a managed transition to support every worker and every business. Because we’ll never leave them to go it alone.

Timber communities have worked with us to identify the jobs and growth sectors that will drive a sustainable future in their local economies. We’ll continue to invest in these opportunities to support and create jobs through the Community Development Fund.

We’ll continue the discussions we’ve been having with Opal to support their transition to plantation supply and recycled products. The dedicated Opal Worker Support Service will support every impacted worker at Maryvale.

All other native timber mills will be eligible for a voluntary transition package, whether they choose to stay in timber processing or switch to other industry sectors. Mills that stay will be able to access investment support through the Timber Innovation Fund.

The Government is also providing support to local businesses reliant on Victorian hardwood supply to manage the transition process. The Supply Chain Resilience package will support business continuity and provide assistance to help manufacturing and other businesses make the transition to future opportunities.

As part of the transition, the Government will be required to deliver a program of land management works to manage the 1.8 million hectares of public land currently subject to the timber harvesting allocation order. This will see us deliver the largest expansion to our public forests in our state’s history.

The Government will establish an advisory panel to consider and make recommendations to Government on the areas of our forests that qualify for protection as National Parks, the areas of our forests that would be suitable for recreation opportunities - including camping, hunting, hiking, mountain biking and four-wheel driving - and opportunities for management of public land by Traditional Owners.

Planting Millions More Trees For Thousands Of Jobs

Victoria’s timber supply is being shored up with a \$120 million investment – the single largest investment in plantation establishment in the state’s history – in an agreement with Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP), planting an extra 16 million trees in a new estate.

The new plantation will underpin 2,000 new and existing jobs in regional Victoria, and cover an area equivalent to 7,000 MCGs.

HVP, one of the largest private plantation companies in Australia, will match the Labor Government’s investment almost dollar-for-dollar to buy, lease and manage the more than 14,000 hectares of softwood plantations.

To protect timber supply for our construction industry, the new plantations have the potential to bring international processors to the region – boosting the state’s production of much-needed building products.

The investment will also contribute to Victoria’s nation-leading emissions reduction targets by removing approximately 7.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over the next 25 years – the equivalent of removing more than 60,000 cars from the road per year.



This long-term investment through the Gippsland Plantation Investment Program underpins the Victorian Forestry Plan – the Labor Government’s roadmap to ensure a long-term and sustainable future for Victoria’s forestry industry – and for the Victorian workers who rely on it.

Victoria is home to Australia’s largest timber plantation estate, with five out of six trees currently harvested across the state now coming from plantations – over time, this investment will make it six out of six.

Plantings will begin in 2023, subject to final approvals.

For more information, visit vic.gov.au/plantations



Backing Manufacturers To Lead Our Low Carbon Future

Businesses are being supported to upskill and capitalise on opportunities to manufacture low carbon products, thanks to the Andrews Labor Government’s Low Carbon Manufacturing Grant Program – a Labor Government investment of around \$7 million to help Victoria meet exponential demand for low carbon technologies and products.

As Victoria works towards halving emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050, this initiative will help Victorian businesses become more competitive in a low carbon economy, while strengthening the state’s supply chain resilience and creating high-skilled jobs.

The program includes two streams. The Business Readiness Stream will provide grants of up to \$50,000 for small to medium sized manufacturers to access business services, advice or expertise to pivot towards low carbon and renewable energy supply chains.

Through the Business Growth Stream grants of between \$50,000 and \$250,000 will be available for businesses to purchase or develop new equipment, skills or technology to manufacture components and products that support the transition to net zero emissions.

Manufacturing is a driving force of the Victorian economy, employing more than 260,000 people and contributing around \$31 billion to the state’s economy each year.

The Victorian Budget 2022/23 included the establishment of the \$120 million Victorian Industry Fund to support Victoria’s economic recovery, generate new jobs and boost advanced manufacturing.

For more information about the Low Carbon Manufacturing Grant Program, visit business.vic.gov.au/lcmgp

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