

Tuesday, May 7 2002

## BOOST FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL EDUCATION

Victoria's rural and regional communities will be further strengthened by today's massive boost to education, the Bracks Government announced today.

Education and Training Minister Lynne Kosky said the Government was giving more people in rural and regional Victoria greater access to innovative, leading-edge education and training.

Ms Kosky said delivering a high quality education system to all Victorians – no matter where they live – was a top priority under the Government's 10-year plan, *Growing Victoria Together*.

"The Bracks Government is committed to ensuring that rural and regional Victoria sees the benefits of the State's economic prosperity," Ms Kosky said.

"At the same time, we are making sure that crucial skills needed to keep communities across the State thriving, as well as job and study opportunities, are provided locally.

"Quality lifelong education is crucial to ensuring that communities across the State remain vibrant and robust, and are able to provide opportunities for their young people."

Ms Kosky said 40 schools and one TAFE institute in rural and regional Victoria had been allocated more than **\$70 million** for capital works.

"Regional and rural schools will also benefit from the 925 additional full-time teachers that are being employed across the State," she said.

The \$70 million funding includes:

- **\$4 million** for stage one development of the state-of-the-art Maryborough Education Precinct;
- **\$3 million** for the new Lara Secondary College;
- Over **\$2 million** for the new East Gippsland Specialist School; and
- More than **\$1 million** to build a food technology and Koorie education centre at the Benambra campus of the Wodonga Institute of TAFE.

Ms Kosky said rural and regional schools would also share in statewide initiatives, including:

- **\$84.3 million** Middle Years Reform for grants to primary and secondary schools to employ 70 teachers and develop local solutions to keep students engaged in education in the important middle Years 5 to 9. Schools including Ballarat, Cobram, Cohuna, Euroa, Kyabram, Myrtleford and Orbost secondary colleges have blazed the trail with innovative pilot Middle Years programs over the past year.

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- **\$81.6 million** for the Access to Excellence initiative has been allocated to hire 300 additional secondary teachers for nearly 100 specifically targeted schools, to boost literacy and numeracy, cut absentee rates and engage more years 7-10 students.
- **\$34.6 million** to expand the successful Early Years Numeracy Program and hire the equivalent of 150 early years numeracy teachers.
- **\$43.3 million** to continue to reduce class sizes in Prep-2, by employing an additional 285 teachers. Rural and regional Victoria already leads metropolitan Melbourne in reducing class sizes.
- **\$47.7 million** has been allocated towards the statewide roll-out of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning – the new fully accredited certificate for years 11 and 12 students.
- **\$31 million** to improve access to school transport.
- **\$3.6 million** for additional Koorie educators and home school liaison officers.
- **\$8 million** for the FreeZA youth program.
- **\$8 million** sports package including funding for equipment and staging of the 2005 Pacific School Games.
- **\$9.2 million** to develop Design Centres of Excellence.

“The Bracks Government is turning things around in education and the \$550 million statewide boost to education in this Budget shows it is our number one priority,” Ms Kosky said.

“Key issues, such as transport, creating local education and employment opportunities, upgrading school buildings and cutting absentee rates are addressed in this Budget.

“Initiatives in the 2002-03 Budget will ensure that the Victorian Government education system continues to lead the nation.”