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FROM THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
& THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION SERVICES

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PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS BIG WINNERS IN EDUCATION

Students in provincial Victoria are the big winners from a massive investment of more than **\$170 million** over four years in new school and TAFE facilities, regional skills, a renewed focus on improving literacy and a *School Start Bonus* for Preps and Year 7s.

The Minister for Education and Training, Lynne Kosky, and the Minister for Education Services, Jacinta Allan, said the Bracks Government was investing heavily in education in provincial Victoria, making it a great place to live, work and raise a family.

“Since 1999 the Bracks Government has invested an extra \$442 million for 242 projects at 175 schools in rural and regional Victoria,” Ms Allan said.

“We have also employed more teachers and staff to reduce average primary class sizes to record lows, targeted literacy and numeracy skills and lifted school retention rates,” Ms Kosky said.

Ms Allan said the *School Start Bonus* would benefit the parents of an estimated 38,000 students from provincial Victoria who annually start Prep or Year 7, at a cost of around **\$53 million** over five years.

“This bonus is great news for country parents, helping them meet the costs of their child starting their primary or secondary schooling,” Ms Allan said.

A **\$62 million** school and TAFE construction and equipment program includes:

- \$9.1 million for replacement schools at Newcomb Secondary College and Traralgon Secondary College – East campus;
- \$41.9 million for modernisation projects at 13 schools including Warrnambool College, Port Fairy Consolidated School, Mount Pleasant Primary School and a new rural learning centre; and
- \$11 million to upgrade teaching facilities at the Warrnambool campus of the South West Institute of TAFE including the construction of state-of-the-art IT laboratories, classrooms and facilities for visual arts students.

Regional Victoria will also share in a \$32 million initiative to build at least four new Technical Education Centres (TECs), including at Ballarat and Wangaratta, and \$48 million for teaching equipment at TAFE Institutes across Victoria.

The school communities of Colac, Kyabram and Wodonga will also receive funding to undertake design works for regeneration projects.

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Regional schools will receive **\$33 million** of the first \$100 million of the anticipated proceeds of the Snowy Hydro sale which has been allocated for the following modernisation and regeneration projects:

- \$5.5 million to begin the construction of new schools at Torquay 7 – 9 (design works) and Grevillia Park Primary School at Wendouree West;
- \$26 million for 8 modernisation projects including Mildura South Primary School and Echuca Secondary College; and
- \$1.5 million to replace relocatables at Traralgon South Primary School with permanent facilities.

Every school in provincial Victoria would also share in a \$50 million boost from the *Building Tomorrow's Schools Today* fund to fast track maintenance works this year.

Ms Kosky said apprentices and trainees in provincial Victoria would be further supported by increasing the accommodation allowance for apprentices and trainees at a cost of **\$6.2 million** over four years.

“This will help rural and regional apprentices and trainees to offset some of the costs of staying away from home when on block release as part of their studies,” she said.

“An additional **\$15.5 million** over four years has been invested for new training opportunities in areas of high regional demand, as outlined in the Provincial Statement *Moving Forward*.”

Ms Allan said provincial students and families would also benefit from a range of other statewide Budget initiatives, including:

- \$241 million over four years to boost the skills of the workforce and grow the economy through the Government's *Maintaining the Advantage* Skills Statement;
- \$36 million over four years for a \$500 skills bonus to encourage apprentices to complete their trade;
- \$11.7 million over three years to employ 45 new Literacy Improvement Teams, who will work with teachers to help students most in need of extra assistance;
- \$47.2 million over four years to continue the Victorian Certificate for Applied Learning which includes the continued employment of the equivalent of 120 teachers, so more students are given a chance to enrol in a wider range of VCAL programs;
- \$24.1 million over two years for the equivalent of 250 full time teachers under the Schools for Innovation and Excellence program for students in Years 5 to 9;
- \$9 million to upgrade and replace old computers;
- \$5.1 million over three years for the creation of a new Academic Number and;
- \$9.3 million to drive excellence through specialisation in secondary schools, building new facilities in areas such as science and technology, arts, design, music, languages and sport.

Ms Allan said the Bracks Government's investment in the education system was already getting results for student and families across provincial Victoria.

“We still have more to do and will continue to invest in our students and our schools,” she said.