

euroa

gargarro

stanhope revitalisation

rushworth hospital co-location college upgrade

country roads nagambie ambulance

euroa

kings park

mobile blackspots

seymour college upgrade

upgrade

community avenal cricket club

infrastructure broadford

public beds

harley hammond cfa station

reserve kilmore street revitalisation

mental health

public

transport

rail trails

park rangers

train services

benalla p -12

2015 State Budget Report

for Regional Victoria

Foreword

Over the past month I have actively sought feedback from residents across the Euroa electorate on what they would like to see prioritised in the 2015 State Budget. This report summarises the information I have received through both formal and informal channels.

This has included listening posts in various towns throughout the Euroa electorate including Benalla, Euroa, Heathcote, Kilmore, Murchison, Nagambie and Seymour. Residents were also invited to provide feedback in writing via mail or by email, as well as through my website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In addition, National Party members from the Euroa electorate met for a roundtable discussion to provide their input. I spoke to an estimated 150 individuals formally throughout these consultations and many more on my day-to-day travels around the electorate.

This report is not exhaustive, but it is designed to provide Premier Daniel Andrews and the new Labor Government with an understanding of the main issues affecting the Euroa electorate.

There is a deep level of concern among people throughout Euroa about the state of country roads. This has been exacerbated by the government's decision to axe the Country Roads and Bridges Program, put in place by the former Coalition Government. The program provided small rural councils including Mitchell, Strathbogie and Benalla, with \$1 million each year to help maintain their vast networks of roads and bridges. Many residents questioned the government's decision to pay \$640 million to not build East West Link and listed local projects for which that money could have been used.

Healthcare also rated very highly as a concern. Specifically, the co-location of Rushworth's Waranga Hospital, the need for a permanent ambulance presence at Nagambie and the provision of publically funded hospital beds to ensure residents within Strathbogie Shire do not have to travel long distances to access public healthcare were raised as urgent priorities.

I want to thank all residents who took the time to have input into this process over the past month through the roundtable and many listening posts, emails and conversations.

As the Member for Euroa and Deputy Leader of The Nationals, I will continue to advocate for these issues on behalf of our communities.



Steph Ryan MP
Member for Euroa
Deputy Leader of The Nationals



for Regional Victoria

Euroa's priorities

Education

All young people, regardless of whether they live in the city or the country, deserve a quality learning environment. The need to improve local schools was raised repeatedly by constituents. Benalla and Seymour's P-12 colleges were referenced many times in discussions and there was a clear desire to see these regeneration projects completed.



Research by the Tomorrow Today Foundation shows one in every three students starting school in Benalla is considered vulnerable. Seymour faces a similarly high level of disadvantage.

"We need stage two and three completed...hopefully both stages together so there's less disruption to the kids"
Seymour P-12 College School Council
President David Stute

Seymour College has completed the first stage of its regeneration but requires a further \$15 million to rebuild its years 5 to 9 and years 9 to 12 areas. The school is particularly concerned about maintaining learning outcomes as students transition from modern, open learning spaces during the early years of their schooling into older facilities from years 5 to 12.

"We should be looking at the bigger picture and making our school a functional place that meets the requirements of a combined school where all the staff and students are one big happy group"
Jazzy Burke, Year 9 Benalla College student



Benalla P-12 College was allocated \$5 million in the 2014 State Budget to undertake masterplanning and begin building works. The school has since been told that it must spend the money allocated to capital works on maintaining buildings it intends to demolish. A further \$15 million is required to rebuild the school.

Benalla P-12 receives students from not only Benalla but also surrounding areas. Buildings are riddled with mould and are not befitting of a 21st century learning environment.

The Coalition committed the \$30 million required to rebuild both of these schools, however no commitment has been made by the new government. There is a real sense of frustration among the Benalla and Seymour communities that funding has become a political issue. Residents want to see a priority placed

Country roads and bridges

Labor's decision to axe the \$160 million Country Roads and Bridges Program is already becoming a major problem for shires in the Euroa electorate. Mitchell Shire alone manages 1106km of rural roads and 60 bridges and there are 13 major projects which were earmarked for funding. These include the Sunday Creek bridge on Northwood Rd, Railway Place in Seymour and Rutledge St in Kilmore. According to Mitchell Shire Council chief executive officer, the shire is heavily dependent on the program and will have to consider placing load limits and possibly even the closure of some bridges if the new government does not reinstate the Country Roads and Bridges Program.

Residents electorate wide are beginning to feel the strain as upwards pressure is placed on rates and other council projects such as pavement renewal are put on hold in order to fund road works. Many constituents raised concerns about the state of their local roads and frustration that their council does not address the problem. According to council representatives, the money is simply not there and as a result they must find funding elsewhere.

The government's recently announced Stronger Country Bridges Program does nothing to assist rural shires with funding much needed road works and is simply rebranded VicRoads funding being used in an attempt to fool country voters. Labor must commit to the ongoing maintenance of roads and bridges across the Euroa electorate.



Public beds in Strathbogie

Placing public beds at Euroa Health is a clear priority for Euroa residents. Strathbogie Shire is the only municipality in Victoria without publically funded hospital beds. As a result, residents without private health insurance must travel to Shepparton, Benalla or Seymour to access treatment. The provision of public funding for subacute beds in Euroa would ease pressure on regional hospitals, minimise the need for ambulance services and secure the long term future of Euroa's health services.

Euroa Health is a fully accredited 24 bed hospital and 67 bed residential aged care facility and has cared for the Euroa community for 87 years. Without public funding, the trend of declining revenue through private health insurance will see the service face ongoing financial challenges, causing further hardship to many in the community and stretching emergency departments in the region's hospitals.

Before the 2014 election, the Coalition promised to fund two public beds at Euroa Health as part of a \$10 million fund for bush nursing hospitals across Victoria. A detailed paper outlining the issues and the hospital's request was provided to Labor before the 2014 election however the new government is yet to provide any meaningful response.

for Regional Victoria

Rushworth Hospital upgrade

Last year, the previous Coalition Government committed \$7 million to complete the co-location and upgrade of the Waranga Memorial Hospital and Waranga Aged Care Hostel at Rushworth. Labor has not responded to my calls for them to honour this commitment however the community continues to fight hard to see the project completed.

Residents and staff have raised concerns regarding the state of the current facility which is 50 years old and no longer meets contemporary standards. Labor must not place the healthcare needs of Victorians living in Melbourne above those living in regional Victoria. Instead it is important that they recognise the hard work of Goulburn Valley Health, the Rushworth Hospital Committee and the former Member for Rodney Paul Weller and fund the project.

Ambulance services

There is a demonstrated and urgent need for additional paramedics in the Euroa electorate, particularly in Nagambie and Rushworth.

Nagambie has been serviced since 2004 by a dedicated community emergency response team (CERT). The CERT was established as an interim measure to precede a dedicated ambulance service. The CERT has done a fantastic job, however, in recent years the number of volunteers has dwindled from 30 to 11.



Concerns about gaps in ambulance services are intensified by the town's forecast population growth and an ever expanding calendar of events that includes the APS Head of the River, the Australian Skydiving Championships and music festivals. The town also swells dramatically during the summer months, when holiday makers flock to Lake Nagambie.

While the new government's recent commitment to re-examine the data surrounding Nagambie is welcome, the need for permanent paramedics is already well established and should be funded in this year's State Budget.

In Rushworth the Goulburn Valley Health Waranga Campus Advisory Committee has been pushing for an improved ambulance service for the Rushworth Hospital catchment area. This covers an area of approximately 1,200 kilometres, much of which is classified as isolated and at extreme risk of bushfire.

Drug education & treatment

There is a significant degree of concern among the community about reports of drug use, particularly crystal methamphetamine, in regional areas. Euroa has excellent drug and alcohol treatment providers, including Odyssey House at Molyullah and Nexus Health in Broadford. The community wants to see these services supported in addition to educative programs to warn communities about the dangers of drug use. Local youth organisations have expressed concern about the government's decision to axe funding for community-driven programs to tackle drug and alcohol problems.

for Regional Victoria

Jobs and employment

Addressing unemployment across the Euroa electorate requires a local, targeted strategy to capitalise on the region's strengths, including agriculture, tourism and the equine industry. A re-elected Coalition Government would have invested \$2.5 million into a strategic, community driven plan to grow businesses and bring new jobs to Seymour. Residents continue to reinforce the need for new industries and jobs in our communities as well as the importance of opportunities for older residents to upskill or re-train.

Public transport

The provision of public transport in communities across the Euroa electorate will expand opportunities for employment and education. Additional train services are required on both the north-east line, servicing Avenel, Euroa, Violet Town and Benalla and the Shepparton line, which services Nagambie and Murchison. Commuters have grown weary of cancelled trains, speed restrictions and infrequent services. The Coalition went to last year's election with the \$178 million Country Rail Package. Under this plan, additional trains were to be placed on both of these lines to improve the reliability and frequency of services. Residents across the Euroa electorate are strongly urging Labor to commit to these additional services in this year's State Budget. Last year's increase in bus services within the township of Benalla has been welcomed by the community and should remain. In addition, greater co-ordination is needed between Kilmore's town bus service and V/Line services. It is not uncommon for commuters, including school students, to have to wait for up to an hour to catch a train because of limited bus services.

Community infrastructure

Community groups and sporting clubs need access to funding for key infrastructure projects and facility upgrades. The Coalition's \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund existed to fund important community works and at June last year had delivered almost \$430 million generating more than \$1.7 billion of total investment across 1,500 projects. These have included \$200,000 for the Benalla Skate Park upgrade, \$300,000 for the Euroa Conference and Function Centre redevelopment, \$500,000 for the Murchison Box Ironbark Rail Trail and \$500,000 for the Chittick Park Redevelopment Project in Seymour. Labor has scrapped the fund and redirected the money to Melbourne, leaving important projects in country Victoria, such as the Avenel Hall refurbishment and the upgrade of Seymour's Kings Park, unfunded.

Telecommunications

Addressing mobile blackspots across the electorate, including Tatong, Goorambat, Reedy Creek, Broadford and Heathcote, is a high priority. Improving communications infrastructure, including mobile phone coverage and internet, is critical to ensure communities are well informed during natural disasters, particularly bushfires. Better mobile coverage and faster internet speeds also opens a new world of possibilities, including new industries and employment and improvements to productivity, health and education.

In 2014, the Victorian Coalition Government allocated \$40 million to address mobile phone blackspots, particularly in high risk areas, and to roll out wi-fi on V/Line's V/Locity services between Seymour and Melbourne. Recognising that responsibility for telecommunications lies primarily with the Federal Government, the Coalition planned to use this money to leverage additional funding from the Commonwealth's \$100 million fund. It is important that Labor does not divert this money.

Euroa electorate residents are also urging the Victorian Government to continue to advocate on behalf of communities in the rollout of the NBN to ensure it is delivered in a prompt and timely manner.

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Priorities raised by community

Avenel

- Avenel Cricket Club upgrade
- Hall refurbishment
- Redesign of railway intersection
- Train services

Benalla

- Benalla P-12 College regeneration
- Benalla Airport upgrade
- Country roads funding
- Funding for community infrastructure
- Drug education
- Train services

Broadford

- Relocation of CFA station
- Harley Hammond Reserve upgrade
- Netball courts upgrade
- Drug and alcohol treatment services

Corop

- Lake Cooper recreational water entitlement

Euroa

- Public beds at Euroa Health
- Country roads funding
- XPT stop
- Local infrastructure funding and facilities (ie indoor swimming pool)

Girgarre

- Girgarre Botanical Gardens

Heathcote

- More bus services
- Mental health services
- Drug and alcohol treatment services
- Mobile blackspots / NBN coverage
- Further education
- Funding to progress business case for proposed dementia village
- Sewerage connections

Kilmore

- Revitalisation of Sydney Street
- Car parking at Kilmore train station
- Improved bus timetables
- Mental health services
- Country roads funding
- Education
- Bendigo-Kilmore rail trail

Murchison

- Kirwans Bridge
- Myki day passes
- Natural gas
- Country roads funding
- Additional funding for neighbourhood houses

Nagambie

- Ambulance services
- Rates
- Skatepark
- Country roads funding
- Lake Nagambie retaining wall - repair works

Redesdale

- Redesdale Community Hub Proposal
- Walking and riding trails linking Redesdale to Bendigo
- Works on arterial roads in and out of town

Rushworth

- Waranga hospital and aged care co-location
- Ambulance services

Seymour

- Seymour College upgrade
- New industry and employment opportunities
- Seymour flood levee
- Kings Park upgrade including netball courts, changerooms and playgroup facilities
- Country bridges

Stanhope

- Stanhope revitalisation project
- Refurbishment of public housing

Strathbogie

- Additional train services
- Management of Strathbogie Forest

Violet Town

- Train services

Wandong

- Further consideration of Kilmore-Wallan bypass
- Funding to improve enforcement in state forests

2014 election commitments

The following provides a summary of election commitments for the Euroa Electorate made by The Nationals in Coalition and Labor before the 2014 State Election. This list does not include statewide funding programs.

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The Nationals in Coalition:

- Benalla P-12 College upgrade - \$15 million
- Seymour College upgrade - \$15 million
- Waranga Hospital co-location - \$7 million
- Nagambie paramedics - \$2 million
- Public beds at Euroa Health
- Kilmore main street revitalisation - \$2 million
- Upper Goulburn Industry and Infrastructure Fund - \$2.5 million
- Additional car parking spaces at Kilmore station
- Additional train services on Shepparton and north-east lines
- Broadford CFA relocation
- Kings Park upgrade - \$650,000
- Euroa saleyards stage 2 - \$500,000
- Stanhope revitalisation project
- Girgarre botanic garden 'Gargarro'
- Seymour MICA paramedic
- Avenel cricket club - \$35,000

Labor:

- Euroa saleyards stage 2 - \$500,000
- Bendigo-Kilmore rail trail feasibility study - \$150,000