

Use the Commonwealth Games to develop the regions fairly

The Commonwealth Games will be hosted in five regional Victorian cities in 2026: Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton, Gippsland and Geelong. The Victorian Government states that this multi-city approach will allow for the social and economic benefits to be spread across Victoria, with investment in community, housing and sporting facilities to leave a lasting legacy on Victoria's regional centres. Last year's Budget allocated \$2.6b over 4 years to enable organisation and hosting of the Games.

This Budget funds the election commitment to improve regional public transport, which will have significant benefits for regional Victorians, as well as domestic and international visitors when the Games begin.

Significant initiatives

- **More trains, more often**
\$6.4m in 2023-24 (\$219.1m/4 yrs) to provide more frequent train services to Shepparton, Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Gippsland.

Supporting commentary

Since announcing the Commonwealth Games, the Victorian Government and the Organising Committee have made a range of welcome commitments, including making the Games carbon-neutral, converting a portion of the athlete's villages into affordable housing when the Games conclude, and the creation of more than 7,500 jobs.

While this Budget does not detail how these commitments will be achieved, we note that, with careful planning, governance and leadership, investment in the Commonwealth Games can enable positive social and economic legacy benefits for host city communities and Victorians broadly. These benefits will not be automatic. As such, VCOSS is keen to work with the Victorian Government to fully realise the benefits of the Games, and prevent any unintended consequences.

In particular, we look forward to being involved in:

- the development of solutions to manage surges in housing demand and the impact on both long-term rental accommodation and emergency accommodation
- converting a portion of the athlete's villages into social housing
- increasing accessible transport across regional Victoria
- ensuring there are meaningful pathways into employment for disadvantaged jobseekers, and
- limiting greenhouse gas emissions.