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G'day Eastern Vic

Thanks for taking the time to read my monthly update.

I'm proud to be part of a government which is leading the nation across the board.

Victoria's unemployment rate is 3.5 per cent and Victoria's regional unemployment rate is the equal lowest in the nation at 2.7 per cent.

And to continue this we're bringing back the SEC.

Jeff Kennett privatised much of Victoria's public sector. He ripped rail and government services out of regional Victoria destroying jobs and raising electricity prices in the process. This included selling the State Electricity Commission which was a powerhouse in the energy market.

This time around, the SEC is set to lead Victoria's renewable energy transition with a focus on supply, homes and people. Premier Allan this month launched the SEC's Strategic Plan 2023-2035, which sets out three clear priorities for the next 10 years: investing to accelerate the energy transition, supporting the switch to all-electric households, and building a renewable energy workforce.

The SEC will invest an initial $1 billion towards building 4.5 gigawatts of new power through renewable energy and storage projects – enough to power around 1.5 million homes. As a former sparkie, I'm so excited for the tens of thousands of jobs this is going to create, especially in regional Victoria, while reducing emissions and lowering prices through cheap renewable energy generation and storage.

Voice Referendum Result

This result is a crushing blow for First Nations people across Australia.

I am so proud of all the volunteers across Eastern Vic who gave up their time to campaign for something bigger than themselves. I caught up with lots of you, and whether it was early voting in Sale and Bairnsdale, door-knocking across the Peninsula, or local groups getting out in the community to talk to voters, everyone was so enthusiastic and positive. This campaign would not have been possible without your efforts, and although the Voice didn't get up, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be proud of all the work you put in.

Although the outcome didn't go our way, that doesn't mean we give up and stop fighting. I believe in constitutional recognition, and I believe in solutions for First Nations communities coming from those communities. This result will probably set the movement back, but it's on us to keep fighting for Indigenous rights, and that's something I am deeply committed to.

In Victoria we have constitutional recognition, we have a Voice in its second term with the First People's Assembly, a truth telling process with the Yoorrook Justice Commission, and we are working towards Treaty.

CFMEU Construction & General National Dinner

The mighty trade union movement has fought for workers' rights for decades in Australia, and I've been a proud supporter since back when I was a sparkie. Workplace safety is at the heart of the government's agenda, and has been a big issue this past month.

The Safe Work Australia report was clear: engineered stone causes Silicosis. This is a national tragedy and disgrace, and that's why we've introduced the toughest regulations in the country. We look forward to working with the Commonwealth, states and territories to co-ordinate a national ban on engineered stone – this is the most effective way forward.

This month also marked 53 years since Australia's worst industrial accident, killing 35 construction workers and injuring 18 more, when a 112-metre span bridge collapsed and fell 50 metres to the ground and water below. No job is worth a worker's life. At the Westgate Bridge, the CFMEU organised a gathering of union members to remember this tragedy, and I spoke in Parliament about the need to ensure workers are safe in the workplace, which you can view here.

Unions are also taking a leadership role on policy and are looking out for workers, their families, and communities. CFMEU National Secretary Zach Smith gave a recent speech to the Press Club outlining a proposal for a tax on super profits which would be used to fund social housing, which you can view here.

Funding Announcements

A number of groups in Eastern Victoria this month have received funding from the government for a range of activities, highlighting the investment we're making across the state. Here are just a few of the groups who have received funding:

- Wellways are partnering with the Victorian government to open a Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centre in Bairnsdale, as part of a $54.4 million investment in mental health infrastructure.
- The Orbost Chamber of Commerce received a $115,000 Community Development Fund grant for a feasibility study for a National Seeds Institute in Orbost, to leverage the district's long history and proven expertise in seed testing, breeding and storage.
- Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation were issued two licences for cultural water use by Southern Rural Water – one of 200 megalitres at Buchan Munji, as well as 500 megalitres of water for the Tambo River.

Open Grants

There are also a number of grants opening up which I encourage groups to apply for across Eastern Vic. Here are some of the main ones:

- Men's Sheds Grant applications are closing in November, with funding available to build, refurbish or extend men's sheds.
- Low Carbon Manufacturing Grants Round 2 have just opened up, which support manufacturers to undertake investments enabling them to participate in global supply chains for renewable energy and low carbon components.
- New Angling Club grants remain open for up to $10,000 for a range of different projects to assist angling clubs in retaining and attracting more members, encouraging more families to take up fishing.
- Resilient Coasts Grants of up to $200,000 are available for organisations to

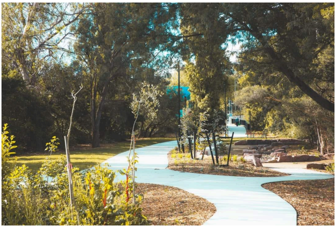
progress strategic coastal hazard risk management and adaptation aligning to one or more stages of Victoria's Resilient Coast framework.

Lions Park Lilydale Opening

Lions Park in Lilydale has just received a big upgrade.

The main thoroughfare has been upgraded with better lighting and visibility, making sure locals are safer crossing Maroondah Highway, while landscaping and infrastructure work has made the park a great place to stop and enjoy nature.

These upgrades come thanks to $585,000 from the Victoria Government, as well as $235,000 from the Yarra Ranges Council.



Mornington Peninsula

Fusion Mornington

Fusion Mornington Peninsula is a community organisation run by youth and community workers which works to support local young people experiencing homelessness.

Along with Minister Suleyman, I met with team leader Gemma Bell to discuss the government's 2022 election commitment of $50,000 to support their work, getting a tour of the facilities and hearing about some of the great work they're doing.

Children's Week at the Briars

Mornington Peninsula shire put on another great family event this month, hosting Children's Week at the Briars.

It was great to spend a Saturday morning walking Briars bush tracks and joining in some of the activities including workshops with Living Culture to learn about Aboriginal bush tucker, Wildlife Sanctuary Walk, Geocaching, face painting, lawn games, flower crowns, a Nature Disco.

Southern Peninsula Community Support AGM

I attended the Southern Peninsula Community Support annual general meeting, and it was an absolute full house. There were those on the board, members, volunteers and friends of Southern Peninsula Community Support. It is incredible work they do and hats off to all involved there: family support service, housing, crisis support including mobile showers and laundry and fresh food.

They also help with bills, budgeting and income, and run the No Interest Loans Scheme.

Steven Todd Volt Farmer - Dromana

EVs are the future of transportation, especially as Victoria transitions to net-zero emissions by 2045. I met with Steven Todd who runs Volt Farmer in Dromana, who is working to establish 4MW of solar, sustainable agriculture, water re-use, and EV chargers.

Vinnies Kitchen

I stopped into Vinnies Kitchen in Rosebud again to say g'day to everyone over lunch and see some of the amazing work these guys are doing to support locals. Safe to say young Slade, a choc Kelpie x Lab is a local favourite.

Gippsland

Leongatha and Korumburra RSL

Minister for Veterans Natalie Suleyman joined me to discuss previously funded projects and upgrades at RSLs in Leongatha and Korumburra, as well as opportunities for future grants.

We also spoke about the Veteran's Card – Victoria, which will save veterans money across the board, including $100 of their rego every year, free PTV on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, and access to veteran's employment programs. All current and former ADF members are eligible.

Errinundra to Snowy Remote Health Project

I opened a truly innovative health project in the Errinundra to Snowy country above Orbost.

The community has worked hard to create their own remote health model where Goongerah, Bendoc and Tubbut halls have received upgrades so that they include health consulting suites. This will be complemented with a remote area nurse who will visit these halls to treat locals.

The thing that takes this project to the next level is the integration of the HoloLens technology, which is a mixed reality headset that allows a health specialist to interact with their patient virtually from a remote location, which could be anywhere in the world.

At the launch of the health model in Bonang there was a demonstration where they simulated a snake bite and a remote GP was able to draw exactly where and how to bandage the persons leg.

The hall upgrades support this work with private suites, backup power and good public internet.

This is a new way to service the health needs of remote communities that reduces the need to travel, is affordable, and allows for coordination between healthcare professionals.

The idea has come from the community and I am proud the state government has supported this with funding for several elements through bushfire recovery, regional development and the HoloLens project at Bairnsdale Regional Health.

A huge congratulations to the Deddick Valley Isolated Communities Group, the Errinundra to Snowy Community Recovery Committee, Warm Corners Consulting who managed the project, and the supporting agencies - Orbost Regional Health, Bairnsdale Regional Health, and East Gippsland Shire Council.

Heyfield Incident Control Centre

The Incident Control Centre (ICC) in Heyfield was continuing operations on the Briagolong and Loch Sport fires when I visited.

With close to 20,000 hectares burnt and active fires still present at the time, the ICC were providing critical functions monitoring the fire front and supporting fire fighting and activity on the ground.

Please stay informed through the Vic Emergency App.

Connecting with the Timber Transition in Orbost, Nowa Nowa, Bairnsdale and Heyfield

NOWA NOWA
FUTURE OF NOWA NOWA AND DISTRICT PROJECT
WWW.NOWANOWA.ORG.AU
HEAL COUNTRY

I again caught up with sawmills and community groups in East Gippsland to hear about how the transition from native timber harvesting on public land is going. Challenges remain however there is a huge amount of community goodwill for new projects that are coming from the local community.

Two feasibility studies have been funded to establish the business case for future investment. One is in Orbost for a National Seeds Institute which would build on the region's competitive advantage in agriculture, and the other is for an industrial land use strategy in Heyfield to facilitate commercial growth and jobs.

In Nowa Nowa the community have come together to deliver their context analysis and have identified opportunities for the future including ageing well and tourism.

I met briefly with Fennings in Bairnsdale and ASH in Heyfield to assure them that I will continue to be an advocate for them in the government including with the new Minister responsible for the Forestry Transition, Ros Spence.

Sale and Bairnsdale Early Voting

yes23
VOTE YES!
yes23
VOICE
Yes

I joined superstar YES volunteers in Sale and Bairnsdale as they engaged with voters about why the Voice would be the next positive step for a fairer Australia.

HAIR SALON
VOICE
Yes
Yes
Yes
VOTE
YES!
yes23

Aqua Energy Redevelopment

The sod has been turned of the $23 million Aqua Energy redevelopment in Sale.

The state government provided $2 million into the Aqua Energy Redevelopment through the Local Sporting Infrastructure Fund as well as a low interest $10 million loan.

Heyfield MicroGrid Project

Julie from the Heyfield Micro Grid project at the Heyfield Resource Centre has been promoting solar uptake and local energy ownership for years now.

They are currently going through the process of assessing tenders for a community battery for Heyfield as part of the government Neighbourhood Battery initiative that was a 2022 Election commitment.

Orbost Community College

Had a tour of the new P-12 Orbost Community College ahead of its opening next year. The Victorian Government has invested $8 million to build the new college, which will combine two local primary schools and the local secondary school.

Thank you to Acting Principal Heather and 2024 Principal Peter for showing me around.

East Gippsland Community Foundation

Michelle from the East Gippsland Community Foundation told me about the amazing work they have been doing investing in community resilience since the 19/20 Black summer bushfires and their plans for the future.

Orbost Bottom Pub

I dropped in and said G'day to Craig who is one of the new owners at the Bottom Pub in Orbost which is making waves in town and is a great positive story. Craig has heaps of ideas for the local area and it was great to connect with him.

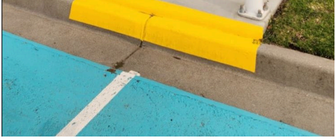
Toorloo Arm CFA

As I was driving past they were having a training night so I stopped in to said G'day - always a good time to thank our volunteers! You can check them out in action here.

FIRE
FIRE
FIRE
FIRE

Bairnsdale EV Charger

GO ELECTRIC. GO ANYWHERE
FAST CHARGER
1
2
EVIE



Good to see the EV charger supported through the State Government's Destination Charging Scheme in Bairnsdale. I even saw a Tesla go up to Bonang, so that range anxiety is certainly dropping in East Gippsland thanks to infrastructure like this!

Local Media

ABC Gippsland Interview with Mim Hook

I joined Mim Hook to discuss the exciting remote health projects in East Gippsland and the Voice. Mim asked me what I thought of Darren Chester's position, which I described as "poor".

REGFM & TRFM

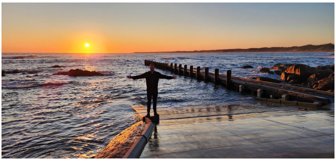
I jumped on air with Damian at Radio East Gippsland and Tom at TRFM to let people know about all the great work happening in the region!

Local Sights

Lake Tyers Pub and Beach

Spectacular view from the Lake Tyers Beach Tavern.

Visited Marlo and Cape Conran



Thanks to Victoria's biggest ever boat ramp construction program, it's easier than ever to launch your boat, including right here at Cape Conran. The resurfaced concrete ramp, extended jetty, and improved turning apron has made all the difference to locals and tourists here in Marlo.

In Parliament

I have just set up a Youtube channel and a website is coming soon.

Constituency Questions (60 seconds)

- **Minister for Prevention of Family Violence:** Minister, what work is the government doing to support people affected by family violence, specifically in the Gippsland region?
- **Minister for Housing:** Minister, what is the government doing regarding social and affordable housing in the local government areas of the Mornington Peninsula shire, Wellington shire and South and East Gippsland shires?
- **Minister for Mental Health:** What is the Victorian government doing to make sure that help is easy to access for those who need it most in my electorate of Eastern Victoria?
- **Minister for Roads and Road Safety:** My question is: out of this funding ($2.8 billion for road maintenance), what is being invested into Eastern Victoria's road network to ensure that our roads are keeping users safe?

Members Statements (90 seconds)

- Workplace Safety
- Heyfield
- Bushfire Preparedness

Bills

- Education and Training Reform Amendment (Land Powers) Bill 2023
- Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023
- Bail Amendment Bill 2023

Committee Work

- I attended multiple meetings as part of the Industrial Hemp Inquiry, which is looking into the issues, barriers and opportunities within the current Victorian industrial hemp industry, economically, environmentally, and industrially.
- I am continuing work as part of the Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games. Despite what some on this committee are saying, cancelling the Commonwealth Games was the right decision. It will save Victorian's getting stuck with over $7 billion in debt for a 12-day event, but will ensure that regional Victoria still receives the upgrades it was promised. These investments will deliver infrastructure and jobs to the regions - which have been sorely needed ever since Jeff Kennett ripped the guts out of regional Victoria so many years ago.

That's October!

For the thousands of VCE students across Eastern Vic, best of luck as you undertake your exams.

As always reach out to my office if you need help with any state government matters or if you have suggestions on issues or groups I should engage with.

That's all from me this month!

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