

The Winning Formula for Regional Victoria

2026 Commonwealth Games



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The 2026 Commonwealth Games (the Games) presents a unique opportunity for regional Victoria to capture real and positive benefits for locals, built on a principle of longevity – a sustainable legacy for future generations to enjoy. The Games can ensure benefits are created for local communities to enjoy well beyond the sporting competition and event period.

Regional Cities Victoria (RCV) welcomes the focus on ensuring that a by-product of the Games will be a permanent increase in the amount of social and affordable housing in the four regional centres homing athletes. Upgrades to sporting infrastructure will also help attract more major events of international significance to Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, the Latrobe Valley, and Shepparton in the future.

As a leadership group comprising Victoria's 10 largest municipalities outside Greater Melbourne – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, and Wodonga, RCV is uniquely positioned to represent the shared interests of regional Victoria.

Regional Victoria is home to more than 1.5 million people, or a quarter of all Victorians, and our regional cities make up 10 per cent of Victoria's economy. Approximately 800,000 people call one of our 10 cities home, and this number is expected to continue to grow.

The Games provides the perfect opportunity to showcase everything regional Victoria has to offer, as a place to live, to work, or visit. There is no better time to invest in our regional cities.

RCV seeks a commitment from the Victorian Government that the Games will create a legacy for the whole of regional Victoria. This legacy must extend beyond the five hubs and create opportunities across the state.





First Nations

RCV acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We wish to ensure Traditional Owner Corporations, not only across the regional hubs but the whole of the state, play an instrumental role in delivering a Games legacy and are meaningfully engaged in the process of Games delivery.

In partnership with Traditional Owner Corporations, the Games legacy should embrace Victoria's rich diversity and cultural history. This major sporting event provides a chance to educate, reflect and engage in constructive conversations.

There is an opportunity for the Games to provide a timely platform for First Peoples to tell their stories, further strengthening cultural awareness and bringing people together.

Carbon Neutral

The Games will provide a platform to highlight regional Victoria's commitment to caring for country and encouraging sustainable practices. It is important, in reflecting the Victorian Government's commitment to Net Zero by 2050 and the circular economy, that the Games will be an emissions-neutral and zero-waste event.

A truly environmentally sustainable Games will involve athletes, vendors, businesses, volunteers, and spectators, and local communities across regional Victoria will be encouraged to embrace and celebrate these targets.

To support an emissions-neutral Games, **RCV calls on the Victorian Government to develop a campaign that will encourage visitors to offset their emissions from flights and, in doing so, promote carbon offset opportunities in regional Victoria.**

Investments in live sites as new or expanded permanent civic spaces, greening projects, and sporting infrastructure upgrades, each provide an additional opportunity to **utilise indigenous plants where culturally appropriate.**



OUR PRIORITIES

An ambitious mindset has guided RCV's focus on creating a legacy across six key categories. Each region has its own unique offering, and through considered investment, the Games can capitalise on this.

RCV is seeking to ensure our regional communities are engaged and feel proud to deliver a Games like no other, in a place like no other.

Facilitation of partnerships between regional cities and participating countries to provide a base for their training and Games preparation.

\$2 million for each regional city to conduct repairs or upgrade sporting facilities in their region.

All equipment provided for the Games donated to local regional sporting organisations.

\$30 million *Regional Parks and Civic Space Program* to create new parkland and upgrading existing open spaces.

The Victorian Government to sponsor free cultural activities and events across the regions.

Creation of new local Victorian Skills Authority liaison officer roles to be based in each regional city for a minimum of 3 years.

Provide supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds to become Games volunteers, and provide training and a pre-employment qualification.

Regionally based businesses to make-up 100% of all opportunities created through the Games' procurement processes, with priority given to First Nations businesses and employers.

Investment in a \$30 million tourism campaign.

Regional tourism packages to be on offer when people are purchasing their Games tickets.

The Royal Baton Relay visits all 10 regional cities, and that the baton is designed by a regional Indigenous artist.



Pre-Games Opportunities – hosting & training

Regional cities are eager to host teams prior to the official opening of the Games. Each region has an array of council-owned and operated sporting facilities and complexes that could support athletes from each Commonwealth nation and their in-country preparation.

During the 2006 Commonwealth Games, some regional cities hosted a country for this event – providing lasting economic, cultural, and social opportunities for those communities. Hosting countries in regional cities in 2026 will engage residents and encourage people across Victoria to embrace and celebrate the Games. It also provides an opportunity for locals, particularly children and young people, to be exposed to sports they may not have previously known.



RCV calls on the Victorian Government to facilitate partnerships between our regional cities and participating countries to provide a base for their training and Games preparation.

These partnerships will create opportunities for regional communities, such the use of athlete ambassadors to promote and showcase both the Games and regional tourism destinations.

Infrastructure – repairing an old legacy and creating a new one

Sport and recreation are an integral part of regional communities' social and economic life. Due to the limited size and scale of some regions, there can be challenges in providing equitable and suitable sporting infrastructure for all residents.

The Games will provide an opportunity to focus on the health and wellbeing of regional communities and capitalise on the interest the Games will generate, creating an ideal time to invest in sporting infrastructure.



RCV calls for each regional city to be provided with \$2 million to conduct repairs or upgrade sporting facilities in their region.

This legacy investment follows the funding of public swimming pools in various locations following the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

With Victoria's regional cities growing at such a fast pace, there is a need to ensure we continue to maintain their amenity by providing more open space for people to relax, connect, and enjoy. Following the success of the Victorian Government's Suburban Parks Program in the metropolitan area, the Games provides the perfect opportunity to establish a similar initiative in the regions.



RCV calls for the establishment of a \$30 million Regional Parks and Civic Space Program – creating new parkland and upgrading existing open spaces, to be used as 'live sites' during the Games.



RCV would like to ensure that all equipment provided for the Games, be it new or used, is donated to local regional sporting organisations.



Cultural Experiences – community engagement

The 2026 Commonwealth Games will drive a series of cultural experiences based on the Games' values of humanity, equality, and destiny. The Games cultural program can celebrate our First Peoples and feature regional Victorian artists and creatives.

Throughout the summer months and into autumn, our regional cities host a calendar of popular major events and festivals showcasing all that regional Victoria has to offer. These events are unique to each area and there is opportunity to involve elements of the Games into this existing program – building interest, participation and attendance in both.



RCV calls for the Victorian Government to sponsor free activities across our regions – bringing the Games to all parts of the state, involving and including those Victorians who may not otherwise be able to participate in activities in the five hubs or attend sporting events.

People – skilled workers & volunteers

Demand for workers in regional areas is at an all-time high. Regional cities are suffering from skills and labour shortages across a range of sectors. Attracting, retaining, and training the next generation of skilled workers is a key challenge for governments and the private sector.

Skilled and unskilled workers will be crucial to the delivery of the Games, with roles across a range of industries such as building, food production, security, and hospitality required to be filled. The Games provides an opportunity to improve access to education, skills, and training to support people to fill these roles.

The new VSA Regional Liaisons would work with TAFE's and other training providers, local government, businesses, and the 2026 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee, to match local training opportunities and courses with identified skills-needs.

Volunteers will also play an instrumental role in the delivery of the Games. Up to 15,000 volunteers will be required to work together to deliver a successful Victoria 2026. Our regional communities have access to a group of committed and experienced volunteers that can be utilised through local not-for-profit associations and sports and community groups.



To ensure that the right workers can be connected to the right jobs, RCV calls for the Victorian Skills Authority to be funded to create new local liaison officer roles to be based in each regional city for a minimum of 3 years, to ensure that the right workers can be connected to the right jobs.



RCV calls for the establishment of a Commonwealth Games Regional Volunteer Program to provide supported accommodation for 16-21 year olds to volunteer at the Games and to provide training and a pre-employment qualification.



Procurement – business opportunities

Each region has their own specialist industries and companies based in regional Victoria that can be utilised in the delivery of the Games. With such a large scope of business partners required to deliver an event of this scale, the procurement process should prioritise regional services and suppliers from across Victoria including those outside the five regional hubs.

This will support existing businesses in regional Victoria and encourage more businesses to move to, or establish themselves, in the regions.



RCV calls for regionally based businesses to make-up 100% of all opportunities created through the Games' procurement processes, with priority given to First Nations businesses and employers.

Tourism & the Visitor Economy

Tourism plays a vital role in the economies of all regional cities. Each region has a unique offering and is reliant on regular visitors. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, together with recent bushfire and flooding events, has seen billions of dollars lost from regional tourism businesses and Victoria's visitor economy.

The Games presents an opportunity to revitalise our regional tourism industry and showcase Victoria as Australia's premier tourism destination, not only to those visitors to the State but to the millions of people who will be watching the Games on TV. It is estimated the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast had a global audience of 1.5 billion people, boosting tourism in Queensland by about 1.3 million visitors before, during and after the Games spending approximately \$1.1 billion.

To capitalise on the interest the Games will generate, we must ensure that regional tourism operators are equipped to provide high-quality service and experiences.

Any events held during Victoria 2026 should showcase local food and producers from across regional Victoria.

The tradition of the Royal Baton Relay will also provide an opportunity to showcase small communities and lesser-known destinations around regional Victoria and recognise 'local heroes' within regional communities. The baton itself is designed by the host nation and will be an opportunity to reflect the history and culture of our state.



RCV calls for the Victorian Government to invest in a \$30 million tourism campaign – profiling each regional city and its offering to visitors at a local, domestic, and international level.



RCV is calling for a suite of tourism packages to be on offer when people are purchasing their Games tickets – ensuring there is a diverse range of experiences at key destinations across the State.



RCV calls on the Victorian Government to ensure the Royal Baton Relay visits all 10 regional cities, and that the baton is designed by a regional Indigenous artist.



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