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G'day Eastern Vic,

Happy New Year! I'm hoping my update is exactly what you want to kick off the new year.

2023 was a big year, my first full year in the Legislative Council.

We fought hard to get Indigenous Australians the representation they deserve through a voice to parliament, and though we came up short, we can be proud of the work we put in, and ready for the work that is yet to be done towards reconciliation and closing the gap.

Victoria has a new Premier, with Jacinta Allan stepping up to fill the big shoes left by Dan Andrews, and we welcomed a new member to the team with Eden Foster elected to represent Mulgrave in Parliament. Eden's election means there is gender parity in the Victorian Legislative Assembly for the first time in history.

We released the Housing Statement, which lays out our plan to make sure that Victoria has the housing supply we need so that everyone has the dignity of a roof over their head. It was great to see many of you at the Town Hall I hosted with CFMEU National Secretary Zach Smith to discuss the plan, and the union's proposal to fund this in a fair way.

The government has started to bring back the SEC. This year we 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. This is already underway and it's first investment will help build one of the world's biggest battery projects (600MW) right here in Victoria with construction to kick off in 2025.

We're also investing in the next generation through the Best Start, Best Life program, which is delivering free kinder for three- and four-year-olds across Victoria, as well as building new schools, and upgrading old ones. I have loved getting out to visit schools and kindergartens to see what teachers are doing to prepare our kids to be healthy and active members of the community. I'm so excited about some of the new and upgraded facilities recently completed including Korumburra Primary School Kindergarten, Rosebud Secondary College, Orbost Community College, Gumnuts Early Learning Centre, the Herd Intergenerational facility in Mornington, and more.

There's no doubt 2023 has been a big year, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is delivering on the issues that Victorians care about.

Farewell Peta Murphy

We've been hit with some tough losses this year. Only a few weeks ago, we lost a true champion of the Labor movement, Peta Murphy.

Peta was a true friend to so many, and a tireless advocate for her community.

When I first started in parliament Peta was the only Federal Labor MP I had crossover with in the Eastern Victoria region. I've watched and learned from Peta since then as she advocated for the local community, which she did tirelessly. Only 10 days before her passing, she called me to discuss facilities for the sports clubs of Emil Madsen Reserve in Mount Eliza, despite having been in treatment she was still fighting for them.

Peta's legacy is measured by the sheer number of lives she touched. Peta will be missed dearly, the massive turnout at her funeral and community service has left no doubt what she meant to so many.

Protecting Workers

Thanks to Victoria leading the charge for a national ban, engineered stone has been officially outlawed.

No one should be exposed to fatal risks just for rocking up to work, plain and simple. Too many workers were exposed to silicosis, a fatal lung disease, because of engineered stone.

Victoria led the nation in introducing the toughest regulations and the country's first licensing scheme for businesses working with crystalline silica, and now work will start to implement this ban on engineered stone through changes to occupational health and safety laws.

Leading the way on New Energy

Offshore wind will power Victoria with cheap, low emissions electricity as we replace ageing coal-fired power stations.

Companies from all around the world are looking to invest in Victoria as the leader of offshore wind in Australia. This investment is because we have led with targets and policies that show we are serious about decarbonising our economy.

This month the government took another major step by releasing the third Offshore Wind Implementation Statement. The Statement outlines how we will make sure local communities benefit the most through local jobs policies, the use of multiple local ports in addition to the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings, as well as updates on contracting arrangements and transmission.

This is really big news for Eastern Victoria which includes the Bass Strait declared offshore wind zone, the first in Australia. Feasibility licenses are expected to be granted by the federal government soon.

I toured port infrastructure in South Gippsland with Mayor Cr Clare Williams - Tarwin Valley Ward - SGSC and Council CEO Kerryn Ellis and heard about the huge opportunities for local jobs with multiple developers including Star of the South committing to Operations and Maintenance being hosted in the region bringing hundreds of ongoing jobs.

Lowering our emissions and providing cheap electricity to Victorian households and businesses is one of the most important issues for the community, and I'm excited about the role Eastern Victoria will play and will continue advocating for the maximum local benefits.

Mornington Peninsula

Rye Pier

As part of almost $90 million invested by the Victorian government in piers and jetties since 2020-21, Rye Pier's rebuild is officially done, and will ensure that both locals and tourists can continue to use the pier for years to come.

Great to join excited locals to celebrate and congratulations to everyone involved on getting this one over the line!

Living Culture

Living Culture are making a huge impact educating people about First Nations culture on the Mornington Peninsula. Living Culture is a not-for-profit group which provides cultural, environmental, and educational programs to the community.

Lionel and Heidi have big plans and I look forward to continuing to support them in 2024.

Yeah Man for better mental health

Yeah, Man
Yeah, Man
Christmas Special
Yeah Man

Chatting is great, and I love that Yeah, Man is supporting blokes to talk about their battles openly and how we can live better.

Yeah, Man meets regularly so men can openly share the highs and lows with one another, so get along!

Searoad Ferries

Searoad Ferries are a vital part of the Peninsula's tourist and transport infrastructure, carrying over one million passengers between Queenscliff and Sorrento every year.

CEO Matt McDonald gave me a tour of one of their ferries, and we talked about construction of their new Sorrento Terminal starting this year, which will be a big boost to the local economy.

Rye Bowls Club

It was great to catch up with David, President of the Rye Bowls Club. With his committee, they do a lot of awesome work investing in their club and organising social activities and are big contributors to the Rye community.

I started off a bit rusty but by the second end I was holding my own and next time will be looking to get up.

Red Hill Consolidated School

I visited Red Hill Consolidated School to chat with Principal Gus Wettenhall, the main school buildings were built in the 1950s and I'll be working closely with the school going forward.

RHCS
Welcome to
RED HILL
CONSOLIDAT
SCHOOL

Tyabb Kinder

Tyabb Kindergarten's Farm Project will be amazing for local kids!

I joined Paul Mercurio MP and Cr Kate Roper to meet with Lavinia from Tyabb Village Children's Centre to check out the work that has been done on this fantastic project.

Gippsland

Stratford Primary School

Stratford Primary School is getting a new outdoor learning space, thanks to $299,566 through the Inclusive Schools Fund.

Principal Kate Steele showed me where the upgrade will be, which includes an open-air classroom next to their kitchen garden, allowing them to expand their already successful holistic student wellbeing program.

Korumburra Primary School Kinder

The new kinder at Korumburra Primary School will be ready for this year's kinder kids. The two new classrooms mean Korumburra have an extra 66 kindergarten places in 2024.

I'm looking forward to coming back to celebrate the opening that's part of the $371 million in funding to rollout three-year-old kindergartens across Victoria.

Ausnet

I got out with Ausnet in Sale to look at one of their brand new electricity infrastructure upgrades.

This Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter technology drastically reduces bushfire risk.

Gippsland Community Legal Service

Anglicare run Gippsland Community Legal Service who do great work that will have a boost from a new $600,000 grant from the Victorian Government to provide support for East Gippslanders with issues relating to climate disasters including legal services, education, and resources.

I caught up with Principal Lawyer Simon Suttie and the team in Bairnsdale to congratulate them and learn more about their work.

Bairnsdale West Primary School

Good things are on the way for Bairnsdale West Primary School. The main toilet block is being completely refurbished, upgrading ventilation and removing asbestos.

Thanks to Principal Doug for the catch up at such a busy time of year!

Gippsland Lakes Complete Health

Family violence statistics in the East are some of the worst in the State and Gippsland Lakes Complete Health have for years walked to Change the Story and turn the statistics around.

Thanks to GLCH and the hundreds of other organisation across the state who work hard to change this as part of 16 days of activism against violence towards women and girls. It is a change we absolutely have to make.

AJ Freeman Reserve + Lindenow Lights

The new 100 lux LED lighting installed will ensure that players at the Lindenow Football Netball Club can train longer, later, and safer, with nearly $200,000 in funding coming from the Government.

At AJ Freeman Reserve, three new cricket training nets have been built thanks to $70,000 in funding, increasing opportunities for both junior and senior players, especially with Paynesville forming its first female cricket team this season!

Welcome
Welcome
EAST GIPPSLAND

Lakes Entrance CFA

A new Rescue Truck for Lakes Entrance CFA! CFA volunteers keep the community safe and we're providing the equipment for them to do it.

The new Rescue Truck features fully battery-operated gear for rapid response, a full steep angle rope cache, detachable platform, and even a remote operated light tower on the roof.

All this means our volunteers can safely perform more complex rescues and save lives.

LAKES ENTRANCE FIRE BRIGADE
RESCUE

East Gippsland Rail Trail

$4.8 million in upgrades for the 100km East Gippsland Rail Trail are officially open from Bairnsdale right through to Orbost, with both the state ($2.8m) and federal ($2m) government supporting this project which is already bringing huge benefits.

Great to chat to the team at Cranes Civil and Surfacing who did the upgrades and see dozens of people riding from Bairnsdale down to Nicholson for exercise and a coffee with friends!

Radio Media

I've been appearing regularly on a lot of radio programs around Eastern Vic, so keep an ear out to these programs:

- Radio East Gippsland
- Mim Hook ABC
- RPPFM Mornington

Newspaper Coverage

Here are how local newspapers have been covering me this month:

- Stratford Primary Welcomes New Grants – Gippsland Times
- Delivering on Rescue Response – Lakes Post
- Lakes Entrance Receives New Rescue Truck – The Local News
- Port Positives in South Gippsland Shire – Sentinel-Times
- Lakes Entrance New Truck – GoldFM
- More for Mount Martha to Enjoy – The National Tribune

Media Releases

My office has been active distributing media releases for all the great work our government is doing in Eastern Vic. Check them out below:

- FUNDING BOOST FOR PENINSULA EMERGENCY SERVICES
- FUNDING BOOST FOR CENTRAL GIPPSLAND EMERGENCY SERVICES
- FUNDING BOOST FOR EAST GIPPSLAND EMERGENCY SERVICES
- MAJOR UPGRADES AT BAIRNSDALE WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL
- INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS GRANT FOR STRATFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL
- FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AT COALS CREEK IN KORUMBURRA
- NEW RESCUE TRUCK FOR LAKES ENTRANCE CFA
- ROAD MAINTENCE BLITZ SET TO HIT EAST GIPPSLAND
- BACKING SPORT IN EAST GIPPSLAND

Parliament

HACSU Disability Support Workers

HACSU
HACSU
Health and Community Services Union

Disability support workers are awesome human beings!

Here's Richard who has been a support worker for decades talking about the importance of training and supervision in the sector to grow a sustainable workforce.

Thanks to the Health and Community Services Union for putting on the event in parliament so Government MPs could hear first-hand from support workers ahead of Disability Support Worker Week (4th-10th of December).

Wrap-up

That wraps up a busy month and a busy year for the Victorian Government. As always, please reach out to my office if you need help with any cstate government matters.

As we move into bushfire season, stay up to date on the Vic Emergency app. Be safe on the roads as well – this time of year can be particularly dangerous.

This can be a hard time of year for some, so reach out to one another, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Have a safe and happy New Year.

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