



### **Statement 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**The VRCA acknowledges and thanks the Victorian State Government for recognising that more needs to be done to support our businesses with the release of their Economic Growth Statement.**

In 2020, the Victorian Government recognised the importance of supporting Chambers of Commerce right across Victoria.

We ask that the Government continues to recognise that Regional and Rural businesses can have different needs, and no one is better situated to understand their needs than the local Chamber of Commerce or business group.

Instead of funding national or state bodies to deliver programs, fund local - the people who know. If the same money was invested directly into regional and rural chambers and areas, rather than in a new Statewide initiative, the outcomes would be far greater.

We are dealing directly with small business every day and the situation in many sectors is dire.

### **How Important Is Your Local Chamber of Commerce?**

Regional Chambers serve as a lifeline for businesses, offering networking opportunities, development, mentoring, advocacy, and vital resources to help them grow and navigate challenging economic conditions. Many chambers are struggling to stay afloat, businesses are having to choose what they want to save, and we know too many times this can lead to short term gains for long term pain. Chambers now face the unsettling reality of not being able to deliver the services that businesses depend on unless they receive stable, long-term funding. Many chambers have committed support from their local Government, we encourage the State Government to think long term and ensure financial support for regional and rural Chamber/trader groups is mandated as part of the Government's Economic Growth Statement.

## The Role of Government Support

The Victorian Regional Chamber Alliance (VRCA) is calling on the State Government to provide more secure, long-term funding to ensure that Regional Chambers can continue to offer essential services to local businesses. Without this support, the chambers may not be able to survive, leaving many businesses without the resources they need to weather the economic storm.

The importance of these local chambers cannot be overstated. They are often the first point of contact for small businesses needing advice, training, emotional support, and resources to improve their operations. Chambers provide a crucial link between businesses and all levels of government, helping to advocate for policies that benefit regional economies.

In a time of rising costs and economic uncertainty, these chambers help small businesses stay connected, informed, and competitive. They help businesses find opportunities to grow, even when times are tough. Without a strong local chamber to support them, many small businesses would face even greater challenges in an already difficult environment.

The future of regional businesses depends on the survival of their local chambers. These organisations are a vital part of the ecosystem that supports local economies. If they falter, businesses in regional Victoria will lose a critical support system, and communities will suffer.

That's why the VRCA is urging the State Government to step up and provide the long-term financial support that Regional Chambers need to continue their work. This support is not just about keeping the chambers operational—it's about ensuring that small businesses in regional areas have the resources and advocacy they need to thrive.

By providing secure funding for Regional Chambers, the government can help ensure the long-term success of local businesses and regional communities.

All VRCA members can provide testimonials of the important work we do.

**For all enquiries, please call Jodie Gillett on 0447 301966**

