



STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

MEDIA RELEASE



Fixing Country Roads Program Must Return

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Western Victorian MP Stuart Grimley is urging the government to reinstate the Fixing Country Roads Program, which provides \$1 million to each rural and regional Council to fund road upgrades that were outside basic road maintenance.

The Labor Government discontinued the Coalition's Country Roads and Bridges Program in 2014, however it re-introduced as the Fixing Country Roads Program in 2018/19 and 2019/20 to give rural Councils a leg-up.

However, the program was not included in the last Budget and this has been felt by many regional and rural Councils in Western Victoria.

Mr Grimley said in Parliament that there has been a huge amount of money spent by Councils on unexpected COVID-19 stimulus packages (such as for business owners) and similar programs including removing parking fees, halting payments for Council-run asset hire. He says this is a great reason that these Councils need the Fixing Country Roads Program to be reinstated.

A number of these councils have a small rate-payer base, some with no more than 10,000 people, and the \$1 million cash injection goes a long way in helping to maintain and fix overused country roads.

The last two rounds of funding assisted in projects such as Hesse Street improvements in Queenscliff, the Watchem-Warracknabeal Road Upgrade, Talbot - Avoca Road Renewal and upgrade, Ring Road upgrades at Ballarat to make it safer for truck drivers and daily regional commuters.

Round one of the previous program provided a total of \$30 million to all 48 rural and regional councils with a total of 91 projects being delivered.

Mr Grimley said the huge uptake was a clear indication of the need for this program.

Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"I've recently met with a number of Councils in my region of Western Victoria. Nearly all of them are desperate for funding to fix their roads. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on these Councils, in particular the Councils that are big in land mass but small in population.

The funds needed for this program are miniscule in comparison to the Metropolitan infrastructure cost blowouts.

Regional and rural Councils often have high levels of heavy freight traffic on their roads. It is so important that the government can aid these Councils in making their roads safer for all users.

I've asked the Minister for Roads & Road Safety to reinstate the program in Parliament."

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