

Regional Investment

This Budget includes investments across key areas to support people in regional WA to access essential services. Transport, health and education are the key areas of investment and this is welcome. Housing for community service sector workers continues to be a major challenge for regional services. While investment has been made in regional housing, this is largely focused on Government employees.

Western Australians in regional WA often face higher essential costs compared to Perth residents. As such, while broad scope initiatives to address the cost of living (as outlined in our Cost of Living Factsheet) will offer some support, their impact may be less for regional residents.

WA Labor 2025 Election Commitments

Election Commitment	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) Increase
Status	<i>Partially Funded (BP2, V1, P303)</i>
Investment	\$18.5 million over 4 years
Description	Increase the PATS fuel subsidy from 26 cents per kilometre to 40 cents per kilometre, supporting country residents required to travel to access specialist medical treatment.
Implications	<i>PATS is a vital service for those living in regional and remote WA, and this fuel subsidy is welcomed. However, a further increase is warranted to cover the realistic costs of travel. Additionally, the model requiring upfront payment and significant wait times for reimbursement is a major pressure point for patients who are experiencing increasing costs across the board. Overall patients continue to report significant gaps, challenges and delays, and a full review is recommended to ensure the scheme meets the needs of those accessing it. Importantly, we look forward to seeing the delivery of the \$15.5 million election commitment made to expand the eligibility criteria of PATS.</i> Note: there is \$18.5m outlined in the budget increasing per km rates and a commitment of \$15.5m for an expansion of eligibility that is not in the budget – Media release

Election Commitment	Increase the regional pensioner travel allowance
Status	<i>Funded (BP2, V2, P547)</i>
Investment	\$25.7 million over 4 years
Description	Increase the value of the Regional Pensioner Travel Card by a further \$100 each year (from \$675 to \$775) from 2025-26.
Implications	<i>With rising costs, viable transport alternatives provide significant value for those living in regional areas. This investment makes these options more</i>

	<i>affordable for pensioners, and encourages utilisation of public transport which has positive environmental impacts.</i>
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Election Commitment	Boosting the availability of housing for essential workers in regional WA
Status	<i>Partially Funded (BP2, V2, P718; BP3, P192)</i>
Investment	\$25 million over 4 years; \$104 million over three years
Description	The Regional Housing Support Fund aims to accelerate regional housing development by offering grants of up to \$5 million to address feasibility challenges impacting the delivery of housing projects in the regions. Funding is available to local governments and private developers to fast-track new housing projects and increase land availability in regional areas. Double the GROH construction program to over 100 new builds.
Implications	<i>The \$145 million committed by the Government may include other housing initiatives specific to regional locations. This investment in GROH will support the State Government to attract staff and deliver vital services in regional Western Australia. Whilst this investment is welcome, community and social services continue to struggle with housing staff and community members accessing support. The investment to address the feasibility issues of delivering housing in regional WA is welcome. This must be accompanied by additional investment to address the various other barriers in housing availability.</i>

Initiative	Suburban Flat Fare & Half-Price Transwa Fares
Status	<i>Funded (BP3, P150)</i>
Investment	\$170.3 million over 4 years
Description	Cap fares at the one-zone rate across Metropolitan & Transregional public transport networks. Reduce Transwa regional coach and train fees by 50% from 1 January 2026.
Implications	<i>With rising costs, viable transport alternatives provide significant value for those living in regional areas. This investment makes these options more affordable for all, and encourages utilisation of public transport which has positive environmental impacts.</i>

Initiative	Establish the Virtual Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Hub
Status	<i>Funded (BP2, V1, P332-P333)</i>
Investment	\$12.2 million over 4 years
Description	Comprised of specialist practitioners who will support regional community services to respond to children with complex mental health needs

Implications	<i>This investment will strengthen the specialist mental health support available for children in WA. Virtual support fills a vital gap for those living in regional, rural and remote areas, where access to appropriate support is drastically limited.</i>
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Other Significant Investments

Initiative	School of Isolated and Distance Education
Investment	\$30.3 million over 4 years (BP3, P128-129)
Description	A reallocation of existing expenditure toward the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)
Implications	<i>SIDE provides quality education for students who for various reasons cannot attend classes in regular school. The continued investment provides students, including many in rural and remote WA, the same education opportunities as their peers across the metropolitan areas.</i>

Initiative	Country Nursing and Midwifery Incentive Program
Investment	\$9.8 million over 2 years (BP2, V1, P304)
Description	Temporary Nurse and Midwife Attraction and Retention Incentives
Implications	<i>Attraction and Retention initiatives help to address critical workforce shortages in regional areas and deliver vital health services.</i>

Initiative	Support to attend Country Week events
Investment	\$7.9 million over 4 years (BP3, P128)
Description	The program will provide financial support to schools (depending on their distance to Perth), enabling schools to contribute towards accommodation and travel costs for regional high school students attending the annual multisport event.
Implications	<i>Connection to opportunities such as Country Week is incredibly valued by young people in regional and remote Western Australia. They are a platform for connection to peers, community and future opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach due to geographical isolation and financial barriers. However, WACOSS continues to call for cost of living measures that target those families most at risk who are currently struggling to cover their basic needs.</i>

Initiative	Expand the Community Emergency Services Manager Program
Investment	\$3.5 million across 4 years (BP3, P135)
Description	Six additional community emergency services managers embedded within regional local governments, improving area specific mitigation.
Implications	<i>CESMs are shared resources between DFES and LGs, leveraging local knowledge to enhance decision-making in relation to prevention,</i>

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preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, leading to more resilient communities. With increasing disaster risks, this additional support for regional communities is welcomed.