

# Media Release

**Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Regional Development  
Minister for Agriculture



Wednesday, 8 December 2021

## NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR ARARAT LANDMARK

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting options to breathe new life into a historic site in Western Victoria.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the former Aradale Asylum in Ararat, to announce \$500,000 funding for the facility through the *Investment Fast Track Fund*.

The Economic and Social Development Strategy for Aradale is among a raft of new projects to receive support through the Fund, which is designed to help councils and communities build the things that matter to locals.

Aradale was built in 1860s and at its peak housed almost 1,000 patients. The hospital closed in 1993, following a decision from the Victorian Government to deinstitutionalise patients in the psychiatric hospital system.

The new investment will support Ararat Rural City Council to navigate the heritage and planning complexity attached to the old hospital buildings and assets, to give the 100-hectare site another life.

The site features 63 buildings with several of the original 1860s structures remaining. The project will focus on options to transform the precinct for mixed-use commercial and residential development while ensuring its heritage is restored.

This is first time a significant strategic plan will be undertaken to identify future opportunities for the site. Melbourne Polytechnic and current site users will be engaged as part of exploring options for its future.

The *Investment Fast Track Fund* is taking projects from the ideas phase to be investment and development-ready, with grants of up to \$500,000 available to local councils, community organisations and the private sector for planning, design and business case development.

The *Investment Fast Track Fund* is part of the Labor Government's flagship \$156 million *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund* which helps businesses create more jobs in regional Victoria and supports councils to build the infrastructure locals and visitors need.

The *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund* is central to Labor Government's near \$30 billion investment in rural and regional Victoria since 2015. More information can be found at [rdv.vic.gov.au/rjif](https://rdv.vic.gov.au/rjif).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

*"This project shows how creative thinking can bring about really great solutions – we look forward to seeing how this existing infrastructure can be transformed into new opportunities for the region."*

*"We're supporting communities across the state and ensuring Victoria continues to have the nation's most vibrant regional economies."*

### Quotes attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jaala Pulford

*"Aradale is a significant local landmark and now will be a model for regeneration and reuse – we're proud to be backing an initiative that will make a real difference to how people live."*

*"This project is an opportunity to transform the economy, diversify businesses and secure developments that create new investment to make this region thrive."*

**Media contact:** Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | [Nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:Nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au)