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5 January 2023

Helen Haines MP  
Independent Federal Member for Indi  
117 Murphy Street  
WANGARATTA VIC 3677

Dear Helen

### **Federal Budget 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit projects for the Federal Budget 2023.

With small ratepayer populations, limited sources of revenue and responsibility for thousands of kilometres of roads, many regional and rural councils struggle to maintain the key road links that keep Australia's produce and resource economy going.

The devastating floods that impacted north-east Victoria in October 2022 have had a major impact on our road network. Hundreds of Victorian roads have been damaged by the floods with a significant cost to repair the damage.

A significant issue that I bring to your attention, and one that we need to advocate strongly for is the Federal funding rules that currently only allow us to reinstate assets to their current standard so there is no opportunity to rebuild them to a higher standard to withstand the next event. Often, it is difficult, if not impossible to find the extra funds to build back better.

MAV President Cr David Clark has been calling for ongoing advocacy to introduce betterment provisions for disaster-affected councils under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. To support these efforts Rural Councils Victoria have also advocated for a dedicated betterment, or 'build back better' fund that will help ensure that "Build Back Better" is more than just an empty slogan. Poor and damaged rural roads costs everyone in the state. They slow down and damage farm and transport vehicles, pushing up the cost of labour and repairs. All of which is paid for with higher prices for food and other items at the supermarket and elsewhere.



Further, three years of high rainfall have undermined and degraded the road network to an extent that the damage cannot be rectified by councils alone. There are demonstrable severe impacts for safety and productivity. An additional major regional fund to address these issues is urgently required.

We respectfully request that you take this issue up with the Federal Government as we need to stress the importance of investing more up front which can lower, and in some cases eliminate repair costs following future natural disasters.

I write this letter on behalf of the councils in north-east Victoria, many are in the seat of Indi.

Your sincerely



**Mayor**  
**Cr Bernie Hearn**