MEDIA RELEASE

Mainstreet Australia calls for statewide action to make Victoria's main streets safer, stronger and more vibrant

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Mainstreet Australia is calling on all parties contesting the 2026 Victorian State Election to commit to a $62 million, four-year statewide investment package to make Victoria's main streets safer, stronger and more vibrant.

Launching its ***Main Streets Matter: A Victorian Main Street Renewal Agenda***, Mainstreet Australia says crime, anti-social behaviour and community safety must be the immediate priority, backed by stronger precinct governance, local capability and coordinated investment.

The organisation says retail theft, threatening behaviour, vandalism and perceptions of declining safety are affecting business confidence, workers and the willingness of customers to visit and spend in local shopping precincts.

Mainstreet Australia welcomes recent Victorian Government measures to improve security, including the Hospitality Security Fund and increased deployment of Protective Services Officers to shopping precincts.

However, Mainstreet Australia says the State now needs to build on these initiatives with a coordinated, place-based approach that reaches the wider main street economy, including retail and service businesses, suburban shopping strips and regional centres.

Main Streets Matter: Safe, Strong and Vibrant

Mainstreet Australia proposes a $62 million, four-year renewal package built around three clear pillars: Safe, Strong and Vibrant Main Streets.

SAFE → STRONG → VIBRANT

Mainstreet Australia is calling for:

● $20 million for Safe Main Streets, including a Main Streets Crisis Response Fund and a statewide SafeStreets Co-Investment Program supporting practical measures such as lighting, CPTED assessments, CCTV, graffiti response, safety ambassadors, vacant-shop activation and local safety partnerships;

● $12 million for Strong Main Streets, including a Victorian Main Streets Unit and Strategy within existing government structures, a contemporary Business Improvement District (BID) program and investment in main street leadership and precinct-management capability;

● modernisation of Victoria's Special Rate and Charge arrangements through a contemporary Business Improvement District (BID) framework, with metropolitan and regional pilots;

● $30 million for Vibrant Main Streets, including a Vibrant Precincts Co-Investment Program and a Main Street Amenity and Greening Fund supporting activation, visitation, accessibility, public-realm improvements and urban greening;

● equitable access for regional main streets, recognising their role as commercial centres, visitor gateways, service hubs and civic gathering places; and

● stronger coordination of Victoria's night-time and extended-hours economy through existing small-business and economic-development structures rather than establishing another standalone office or bureaucracy.

Main streets are economic infrastructure

Mainstreet Australia Executive Officer Elizabeth Joldeski said the package should be seen as an investment in Victoria's local economic infrastructure, not simply government expenditure.

"Research commissioned by Mainstreet Australia identified 698 main streets across Victoria, supporting approximately 390,000 jobs and generating more than $50 billion in economic value. That gives a sense of the scale and importance of these places to Victoria's economy."

"Main streets are where thousands of Victorian small businesses employ people, invest, serve their communities and contribute to the identity of our cities, suburbs

and regional towns. Unlike a privately managed shopping centre, however, there is generally no single organisation responsible for their overall safety, management, marketing, activation and economic performance."

"Right now, safety is the issue we are hearing about most strongly. If business owners, workers and customers don't feel safe, everything else becomes harder."

"We welcome the Victorian Government's recent investment in hospitality security and increased visible safety resources. These are important steps. Our proposal builds on that action and extends the approach across the broader main street economy."

"Safety is also about more than enforcement. Good lighting, active shopfronts, clean and attractive public spaces, strong local management and getting more people onto our streets all contribute to places that feel safer and support business confidence."

"The case is especially important in regional Victoria, where the main street is often the town's primary commercial centre, visitor gateway, service hub and civic meeting place. Investment in regional main streets is investment in local jobs, tourism, liveability and community resilience."

"We need existing parts of government working together more effectively with councils, police, businesses and precinct organisations. A Victorian Main Streets Strategy would give us that framework."

Ahead of the November election, Mainstreet Australia will be meeting with political parties, business organisations and local-government leaders and asking them to support the $62 million, four-year renewal agenda for safe, strong and vibrant Victorian main streets.

Main streets matter - to Victoria's economy, to small business and to the communities that use them every day.

Economic figures: Geografia, The Value of Victoria's Main Streets, 2020, research commissioned by Mainstreet Australia.

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About Mainstreet Australia

Established in 1996, Mainstreet Australia represents main streets, high streets, activity centres, business associations, precinct managers, councils, place professionals and small businesses across Australia.