



**2020/21 Victorian
State Budget
Measures**

What does the state budget include for children and families?

Measures relevant to the child and family services sector

The Victorian State Budget 2020-21 was handed down on Tuesday 24 November. The Centre has prepared this quick overview of the budget measures that are relevant to your work in the child and family services sector and to the children, young people and families that you support.

Child and family services and out-of-home care

- **Intensive Family Preservation and Reunification Response - \$51 million in 2020-21 (\$335.3 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to help support earlier intervention in the children and families system to improve outcomes for Victorian children and reduce entries into out of home care. The package includes:

- continuation of funding for Integrated Family Services, Cradle to Kinder, Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder and other evidence-based programs in 2020-21; and
- developing and delivering an outcomes-focused investment and commissioning approach to the delivery of intensive family preservation and restoration through targeted support for vulnerable families using evidence-based programs.

- **Maintaining the capacity of the children and families system - \$91.2 million in 2020-21 (\$365.4 million over four years)**

Continued support is provided for vulnerable children by expanding the child protection workforce and increasing the number of home-based care placements for children who are unable to live safely with their families. Additional financial support will also be provided to meet the individual needs of children in home-based care placements.

Funding is also provided for a range of supports including Child FIRST services to ensure vulnerable families are connected to the services and support they require, early parenting and cultural supports to improve child wellbeing as well as additional capacity for the child protection litigation function across Victoria and an ongoing program to recruit foster carers. Additional funding for the settlement of civil claims for historical institutional child abuse and for therapeutic services provided by OPEN Place and advocacy services provided by Care Leavers Australasia Network will also help support Victorians who were in institutional care as children prior to 1990.

Funding is also provided for Good Money stores in Collingwood, Geelong, Dandenong and Morwell to support vulnerable Victorians experiencing financial hardship by building their financial capacity and security. There is also assistance available to ensure the sustainability of community service organisations at risk of financial stress.

- **Better Futures: Home Stretch - \$3.5 million in 2020-21 (\$75.1 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to support young people to stay with their existing kinship or foster carer families up to 21 years of age, or to transition to an independent living arrangement.

- **Reforming care services - \$86.7 million in 2020-21 (\$363.6 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to improve the lived experience of children and young people in

residential care, including additional investment for the development of 21 two and three bedroom residential facilities, the continuation and expansion of the Keep Embracing Your Success program and additional Targeted Care Packages. Care Hubs will be established to provide intensive support to children and young people before moving to longer-term placements.

Funding is also provided to reduce representation of Aboriginal children in care and continue to support self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians. Aboriginal children and families involved in the child protection system will be provided with services and support to remain connected with their culture. This will include the transition of case management and expanded child protection functions of Aboriginal children in care to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, as well as implementation of family support teams.

- **Maintenance, minor capital improvements and building of new care services properties - \$5.5 million in 2020-21 (\$9.2 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to deliver maintenance works and minor capital improvements for up to 134 Care Services properties, purchase four sites and construct four new Care Services properties by the end of 2021 to support vulnerable children and young people.

- **Shepparton Family Drug Treatment Court - \$1.2 million in 2020-21**

Funding is provided to continue the Family Drug Treatment Court in Shepparton, to assist parents reduce their alcohol and drug dependence and regain custody of their children from out-of-home care, improving outcomes for at-risk children.

Workforce and service delivery

- **Pathways to employment in growth sectors - \$4.2 million in 2020-21 (\$16.6 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for additional job training opportunities to support students and job seekers looking to pursue a career in community services (read more on page 69).

- **Service delivery fund for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations - \$20 million in 2020-21 (\$40 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to establish a service delivery fund that will provide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) with resources to hire additional staff in priority areas determined in consultation with ACCOs and ACCHOs.

Support for low-income families

- **Big Housing Build - \$1.87 billion in 2020-21 (\$3.92 billion over four years)**

Funding is provided to deliver over 12 000 new homes throughout Victoria. This includes 9 300 social housing properties replacing 1 100 old social housing dwellings. Funding will also develop 2 900 mainly affordable housing dwellings.

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) social services response - \$224.6 million in 2020-21 (\$241.30 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to deliver a range of initiatives to support vulnerable Victorians during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This includes funding to support vulnerable children and families and a family violence system response to meet increased demand during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Additional funding is also provided to support people

experiencing homelessness, people with disability, foster and kinship carers, volunteers, food relief and young people as well as people experiencing significant hardship. This support includes providing alternative and temporary accommodation, additional funding to disability services and organisations for continued access to supports and respite for carers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as hardship support programs to assist people living in Victoria who are unable to access other forms of Victorian and Commonwealth Government income support.

- **From Homelessness to a Home - \$84.5 million in 2020-21 (\$150.8 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to extend emergency hotel accommodation for up to 2 000 Victorians experiencing homelessness while they transition into longer term housing. This funding will also provide enhanced private rental assistance, flexible support and head lease more than 1 000 properties from the private rental market, to help people transition from homelessness and emergency hotel accommodation into stable housing in the long term.

- **Supporting asylum seekers - \$3.9 million in 2020-21**

Funding is provided to continue to support the mental health needs of people seeking asylum, including mental health and trauma counselling, material aid (food, clothing), health assistance and subsidised medications, housing assistance and case coordination.

- **Supporting families in need - \$15.8 million in 2020-21 (\$31.6 million over two years)**

Additional funding is provided to the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to support students needing financial support in 2021 to participate in school activities such as camps, sports, outdoor education programs, excursions and incursions. Additional funding will also be provided in 2021 to State Schools' Relief for the Affordable School Uniforms program, to deliver more free school uniform items and other essential items to government school students experiencing financial hardship.

- **Bridging the digital divide and supporting connected learners during coronavirus (COVID-19) - \$4.8 million in 2020-21 (\$24.5 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to allow government school students to permanently retain school-owned computer devices where this is necessary to ensure they are not educationally disadvantaged.

- **\$250 Power Saving Bonus - \$83.2 million in 2020-21 (\$131.6 million over two years)**

Funding is provided for a one-off \$250 Power Saving Bonus for Victorian households that have at least one JobSeeker, youth allowance recipient or pensioner and use the Victorian Energy Compare website to search for the cheapest electricity deal. Further support is provided to frontline community workers to assist with targeted support to vulnerable households.

- **Energy efficiency upgrades for homes - \$163.7 million in 2020-21 (\$447.7 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for energy efficiency upgrades for 250 000 low income households and over 35 000 social housing properties, delivering lower energy bills, improved thermal comfort for families and climate-resilient housing.

- **Get Active Kids Voucher Program - \$10.5 million in 2020-21 (\$21 million over two years)**

To assist families with the costs of participating in community sport, the funding supports up to 100 000 vouchers valued at \$200 each to use toward memberships, participation fees, uniforms and equipment for sport and recreation activities for eligible Victorian children. The program will encourage Victorian children to be active by reducing financial barriers to participation in sport and recreation.

Early parenting support

- **Supporting new Victorian parents - \$2.7 million in 2020-21 (\$20.6 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue the expansion of the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies program to rural and regional areas. The program supports vulnerable pregnant women accessing maternity, specialist and counselling services to help improve perinatal outcomes. Funding also supports maternal and child health services that provide a wide range of programs supporting Victorian families, including both universal consultations for all families and targeted support to Victorian families in need.

Family violence

- **Information sharing and family violence risk assessment and management reforms - \$2.7 million in 2020-21**

Funding is provided to support ongoing work to develop and deliver workforce specific information sharing training through the multi-agency risk assessment and management framework. The scope of training will be expanded to embed information sharing and the multi-agency risk assessment and management framework into business-as-usual practices of all workforces prescribed under relevant legislation that interact with victim survivors and perpetrators.

- **Perpetrator accountability - \$2.6 million in 2020-21 (\$10.7 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue to build a system of accountability for perpetrators of family violence by providing funding to:

- maintain the provision of case management brokerage to support perpetrators to leave home for a time and keep victim survivors safe; and
- continue the Caring Dads perpetrator intervention program following its successful trial.

- **Therapeutic interventions - \$21.2 million in 2020-21 (\$87.3 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for therapeutic and flexible support for children, young people and adults impacted by family violence. This includes providing 5 700 family violence flexible support packages for victim survivors of family violence each year, and continuing adolescent family violence services for young people and their families.

- **Family violence refuge responses - \$6 million in 2020-21 (\$18.2 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for enhanced case management and other operational costs associated with two new Aboriginal-managed and 13 redeveloped core and cluster refuges due for completion in 2020-21. This funding will enable 24-hour access and implement other recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

- **Central Information Point - \$1.5 million in 2020-21 for Output initiatives and \$6.4 million in 2020-21 for Asset initiatives**

Funding is provided to continue the operation of the statewide Central Information Point (CIP) and to finalise planned system developments.

Supporting children and young people at school

- **Inclusion for all: New funding and support model for school students with disability - \$124 million in 2020-21 (\$1.56 billion over four years)**

A new funding and support model for students with disability will be progressively introduced to government schools over five years from mid-2021 (more detail on page 36).

- **Youth mental health support - \$14.3 million in 2020-21 (\$28.5 million over two years)**

Funding will expand existing supports for the wellbeing and mental health of students, including the Navigator program, LOOKOUT, Headspace mental health training, expanding the Mental health practitioners in secondary schools program to include specialist schools, and introducing the mental health in primary schools pilot to 20 further schools. The package will also establish local young persons' psychosocial wellbeing networks for government and non-government school sectors, local governments and community organisations.

Access to early learning

- **Early Start Kindergarten for refugee and asylum seeker children - \$0.9 million in 2020-21 (\$2.5 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to support three-year-old refugee and asylum seeker children to access 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten in all parts of Victoria from 2021. This initiative will also offer the Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) extension grant to four-year-old refugee and asylum seeker children to enable them to access free or low-cost kindergarten regardless of setting.

- **Ready for school: Kinder for every three-year-old - \$17.9 million in 2020-21 (\$258 million over four years)**

Further investment is provided to continue the progressive roll-out of universal three-year-old kindergarten, ensuring that children can access the benefits of two years of play-based learning at kindergarten before school. Funding will meet increasing demand for ESK and extend eligibility for the ESK extension grants to all children known to child protection. The Early Childhood LOOKOUT program will be expanded to meet additional demand as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to provide tailored support for children with complex needs resulting from trauma.

- **Responding to coronavirus (COVID-19) impacts in early childhood - \$3 million in 2020-21 (\$6.2 million over two years)**

Early intervention will support families and children experiencing increased or more complex vulnerability as a result of the public health response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by:

- providing family-focused support for vulnerable children transitioning to school;
- expanding outreach services through the Access to Early Learning program, with a focus on public housing communities; and
- providing additional supports for engaging refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse families in kindergarten.

- **Supporting families with children in kindergarten - \$84.8 million in 2020-21 (\$169.6 over two years)**

Free kindergarten programs will be available in eligible services in 2021 to support families with the costs of early childhood education and make it easier for women to take up employment opportunities. Subsidies will provide free funded kindergarten programs in eligible sessional services and a fee reduction for children attending a funded kindergarten program in long day care centres, saving families around \$2 000 per enrolment. Unfunded three-year-old programs in eligible sessional services will receive additional funding to reduce fees. This will support kindergarten participation, service viability, employment in the early childhood education sector and women's workforce participation.

- **Supporting Victorian kindergartens - \$54.5 million in 2020-21 (\$67.7 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for free sessional kindergarten in eligible services during 2020 and to support the transition to school in 2021.

Youth justice

- **Aboriginal community-led responses within the youth justice system - \$1.5 million in 2020-21 (\$11.8 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to establish and expand programs and supports to help reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system.

- **Embedded Youth Outreach Program - \$1.4 million in 2020-21**

Funding is provided to continue the Embedded Youth Outreach Program in the existing pilot locations of Werribee and Dandenong, where police officers and youth workers are paired to provide assessment, initial support and referral for vulnerable young people and prevent possible future reoffending.

- **Continuing legal assistance support programs for young Victorians - \$3.9 million in 2020-21**

Funding is provided to VLA to support the continuation of legal services for children and young people, and to meet demand arising from the Youth Diversion Program, and the Children's Court's Youth Control Order and the Intensive Bail Order programs. Funding will also be provided to continue VLA's Preventative Detention Order scheme.

For further details about the Victorian Budget 2020-21, visit:

<https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/>