

# What does the state budget include for children and families?

## *Measures relevant to the child and family services sector*

The Victorian State Budget 2022-23 was handed down on Tuesday 3 May 2022.<sup>1</sup> 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

#### ◆ **Aboriginal family services and child protection - \$3.3 million in 2022-23 (\$7.2 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to continue the Aboriginal Children and Families Innovation and Learning Fund. Funding is also provided to ensure Aboriginal children in care receive a cultural safety plan, consistent with legislative requirements in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

#### ◆ **Improving the capacity and mix of care services - \$77.9 million in 2022-23 (\$84.6 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to support existing demand for residential care and to continue trialling the Care Hub program, which brings together multidisciplinary teams to provide children and young people entering out-of-home care with specialist services and immediate care placement options.

Funding is also provided to continue the CaringLife app to enable up to 1,500 children in out-of-home care to store photos and other digital documentation important to their identity. An uplift in base funding for 150 residential care placements is also provided.

#### ◆ **Improving the safety of children and young people in out-of-home care - \$4.8 million in 2022-23 (\$9.1 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to continue developing the menu of evidence-informed practices and programs on the Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN) website which enables the child protection and family services sector to share knowledge and build capability.

Funding is also provided to boost safety measures for vulnerable children and young people through:

- introducing safety checks for adult household members in kinship care placements
- improving cross-jurisdiction information sharing about children and young people
- enhancing service delivery and security for high-risk children and young people in secure care facilities.

#### ◆ **Responding to demand for child protection and family services - \$16.4 million in 2022-23 (\$57.6 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to meet increasing demand for targeted and specialised family services and support for up to 1,000 additional vulnerable families.

Child protection responses will also be strengthened by increasing support staff capacity and enhancing recruitment programs to attract and retain child protection practitioners, including the introduction of a carer help-desk dedicated to assisting carers.

## Family violence

- ◆ **Implementing a sustainable Central Information Point - \$13.4 million in 2022-23 (\$28.4 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to expand the impact of the statewide Central Information Point, a multi-agency service that collates and shares relevant information about the risk of harm posed by perpetrators of family violence to inform family violence risk assessment and management.

- ◆ **Perpetrator responses - \$17 million in 2022-23 (\$30.1 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to enable family violence specialists to continue delivering perpetrator interventions and contribute to an increasing evidence base about what works to change behaviour and prevent violence. Specialists will work with perpetrators and their families to deliver interventions and provide accommodation support, as well as continue specialised programs for diverse cohorts. Funding is also provided for a pilot program to target and evaluate intensive interventions for high-risk and high-harm perpetrators, including strengthened family safety contact.

- ◆ **Refuge and crisis accommodation - \$17.6 million in 2022-23 (\$42.2 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to consolidate and expand the existing statewide family violence refuge and crisis response that supports victim survivors of family violence through a range of measures.

Funding is also provided to partner with three refuge agencies to upgrade and operate agency owned properties and infrastructure, including Berry Street (to assist with operating a five-unit residential facility and three-bedroom property by providing additional staffing, therapeutic supports and brokerage for family needs).

- ◆ **Sustaining family violence reforms - \$19.5 million in 2022-23 (\$43.4 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to support crisis case management and therapeutic support for victim survivors of family violence, specialised therapeutic interventions for children and young people who are victims of family violence, financial supports to assist victims of family violence to establish safety and security, support for the state-wide 24/7 crisis service and women on temporary visas. Funding is also provided for crisis case management to meet increasing demand.

- ◆ **Early interventions for Aboriginal people - \$1.2 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to expand existing early interventions initiatives, including the expansion of the Bramung Jaarn program and tailored early intervention and prevention programs delivered by Djirra.

## Mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

- ◆ **Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing - \$0.5 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to progress planning for two co-designed healing centres that will support and promote the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians.

- ◆ **Strengthening community-based services - \$42.9 million in 2022-23 (\$115.6 million over four years)**

This measure includes funding for a range of initiatives to deliver a mental health and wellbeing system that is reoriented towards community-based treatment, care and support such as in-person group-based parenting sessions to be delivered in regional Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.

## Early childhood education

◆ **Building inclusive kindergartens - \$2.9 million in 2022-23 (\$11.9 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to help kindergartens make facilities and activities more accessible to children of all abilities, and to enhance learning environments for children with disability or additional needs. Grants will be provided to local government and other eligible providers to upgrade early childhood buildings and playgrounds and purchase equipment.

◆ **Continuing early intervention for vulnerable children - \$4.5 million in 2022-23 (\$18.6 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue early intervention programs, including:

- Early Childhood LOOKOUT to support children in out-of-home care access kindergarten and effectively transition to school
- Access to Early Learning to provide intensive outreach for vulnerable children and their families to support participation in early education.

◆ **Delivering 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten - \$8.4 million in 2022-23 (\$50.9 million over four years)**

Funding is provided for continued delivery of 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten under the new Preschool Reform Agreement. Funding will supplement the contribution provided by the Commonwealth Government for delivery from 2023 and implement a new data collection system to measure kindergarten attendance.

◆ **Expanding the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy - \$0.3 million in 2022-23 (\$2.1 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to support children known to child protection and children from a refugee or asylum seeker background to access free or low-cost kindergarten in a sessional service, through expansion of the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy program.

◆ **Improving outcomes for children with disability - \$4 million in 2022-23 (\$16.9 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program to assist children with significant disability or complex needs to participate in kindergarten through the provision of tailored supports including specialist training and consultancy for educators, additional staff in the kindergarten setting and minor building modifications.

◆ **Improving outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children - \$1 million in 2022-23 (\$4 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to extend targeted outreach support for children and families from CALD backgrounds to access and engage in kindergarten, including in public housing communities.

## Supporting children and young people at school

◆ **Engaging students in learning – The Geelong Project, Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement and Project REAL - \$0.6 in 2022-23 (\$4.4 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to continue programs to engage students in learning in the Barwon South West region and the Hume Moreland area. These include The Geelong Project, an early intervention program delivering coordinated interventions across selected schools in the Barwon area, and the Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement and Project REAL, a

capability building network and flexible learning option for local students with significant behavioural issues in the Hume Moreland area.

◆ **Enhanced Navigator Program - \$6.7 million in 2022-23 (\$36.9 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to increase the number of young people aged 12-17 years supported by the Navigator program. The program provides intensive outreach supports to young people who are at risk of disengaging or are already disengaged from school. The program aims to increase the number of young people connected to school and engaged in learning. This initiative includes funding for a pilot to extend the program to include young people aged 10-11 years.

◆ **Lifting student literacy and numeracy outcomes - \$27.1 million in 2022-23 (\$131.1 over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue targeted literacy and numeracy support for students that need it most.

◆ **Student health and wellbeing – school nursing and student support services - \$9 million in 2022-23 (\$11.4 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue enhanced capacity for health and wellbeing services in schools, including through support for additional school nurses and allied health services. The funding will ensure schools can continue to meet student need for nurses, speech pathologists, social workers and psychologists. This initiative also includes funding to maintain the Victorian student health and wellbeing survey.

◆ **Sustaining student mental health services for schools - \$9 million in 2022-23 (\$41.4 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue expanded supports to improve the wellbeing and mental health of students. This includes continuing the LOOKOUT program to support engagement of vulnerable children and young people in out-of-home care, continuing the Headspace initiative, which provides mental health counselling and training, and continuing the mental health practitioners in secondary schools initiative in specialist schools.

◆ **Students with Disabilities Transport Program - \$30.7 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to continue transport assistance through the Students with Disabilities Transport Program, supporting eligible students to attend their designated government specialist education setting.

◆ **Pre-paid public transport tickets for school students in crisis - \$0.3 million in 2022-23 (\$0.9 million over three years)**

Students in crisis will be provided with free public transport travel passes. The 30-day travel passes will be provided to students experiencing crisis such as family violence or sudden financial hardship to ensure they can continue to travel to school and support services.

◆ **Preparing the education system for self-determination - \$3.8 million in 2022-23 (\$5.8 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to improve educational outcomes and experiences for Aboriginal Victorians and to prepare for the forthcoming self-determination in education reforms. This includes continuing the Strengthening Principals' Professional Capability in Koorie Education program, the Speaking out Against Racism program, and expanding Victorian Aboriginal language learning in schools. In addition, funding supports the continuation of a statewide consultation and co-design process to progress Aboriginal self-determination in education.

## Cost of living

### ◆ **\$250 Power Saving Bonus - \$250 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided for a one-off \$250 Power Saving Bonus for all Victorian households that use the Victorian Energy Compare website to search for the cheapest electricity deal. The program will operate for 12 months from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

## Justice

### ◆ **Targeted investment to improve educational outcomes in youth justice - \$5.6 million in 2022-23 (\$30.3 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to deliver education and additional supports to improve the educational outcomes of young people involved in, or at risk of involvement with, the youth justice system.

### ◆ **A new financial assistance scheme for victims of crime - \$2.3 million in 2022-23 (\$39.5 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to prepare for the commencement of the new financial assistance scheme for victims of crime, to become operational in the second half of 2023.

### ◆ **Responding to historical forced adoptions in Victoria - \$3.6 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to implement priority activities to support Victorians affected by historical forced adoptions, including the scoping and design of a redress scheme, discretionary payments to affected mothers with exceptional circumstances (including terminal illness), crisis counselling, integrated birth certificates and financial support to community groups that assist affected people.

### ◆ **Preventing youth crime through early intervention - \$4.5 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to prevent youth crime before it occurs by continuing critical programs aimed at engaging young people in the community and addressing the key drivers of crime.

### ◆ **Supporting victims of sexual violence and harm - \$13.5 million in 2022-23 (\$46.9 million over four years)**

This measure includes funding to improve services for victims of sexual violence and harm, including:

- supporting specialist sexual assault services to deliver therapeutic support to adults, children and young people who have experienced sexual assault and abuse
- continuing support for Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment services for children and young people demonstrating harmful sexual behaviours.

### ◆ **Reducing future justice demand and keeping the community safe - \$22.7 million in 2022-23 (\$73.6 million over four years)**

This measure includes funding for a range of initiatives to address offending and improve outcomes for over-represented cohorts in contact with the justice system, including expanding the family visits support program for prisoners to help repair relationships and assist with reunification of family units.

### ◆ **Diverting children from youth justice - \$5 million in 2022-23 (\$11 million over two years)**

Funding is provided for key initiatives to divert children from the youth justice system, including expansion of the central after-hours assessment and bail service, an after-hours Children's Court service, and additional Aboriginal youth justice hubs.

- ◆ **Improving access to justice for children and their families - \$2.4 million in 2022-23 (\$8 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue the Youth Control Order program, which provides the Children's Court of Victoria with an intensive and targeted supervision sentencing option. Funding is also provided to continue the Intensive Bail Order program, which provides a supervision and support service for young people awaiting trial and for registry staff to maintain delivery of the successful Children's Court of Victoria's active case management program.

- ◆ **Specialist Weekend Online Children's Court - \$0.8 million in 2022-23 (\$1.6 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to establish an after-hours online Children's Court of Victoria service to support children who have offended and help divert young people from custody.

## Support for young people

- ◆ **Supporting Aboriginal youth engagement - \$0.3 million in 2022-23 (\$0.6 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to strengthen the Koorie Youth Council partnership with government in the design and delivery of initiatives affecting Aboriginal young people, consistent with Victoria's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination.

- ◆ **Empowering young people facing disadvantage - \$1.1 million in 2022-23 (\$1.7 million over two years)**

Funding is provided to continue initiatives that support young people at risk of disengagement. The Empower Youth program will be continued, providing early intervention case management to vulnerable young people. Continued support is also provided for young people to participate in Scouts and Girl Guides.

## Support for people seeking asylum

- ◆ **Support for priority newly arrived migrant communities - \$3.3 million in 2022-23 (\$6.7 million over two years)**

This measure includes funding to support improved settlement outcomes for Victoria's humanitarian cohorts and emerging migrant communities, including continuing to provide case management support. Funding will also increase the capacity of Regional Community Hubs across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, supporting enhanced services for new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

- ◆ **Improving health access and outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers - \$5.7 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided to continue and expand services to asylum seekers in Victoria, addressing gaps in safety net supports and delivering culturally appropriate healthcare to newly arrived and at-risk refugees due to ongoing Commonwealth Government funding cuts. People seeking asylum will be provided with primary health care, mental health support, case coordination, and assistance for basic needs, homelessness and utilities. Funding will also boost refugee nurse and bicultural health worker capacity.

## Early years healthcare and parenting support

- ◆ **Closing the gap – universal early years healthcare - \$3.9 million in 2022-23 (\$10.2 million over four years)**

Funding is provided to continue support for maternal and child health services delivered by Aboriginal organisations, and the Aboriginal led co-design of Aboriginal early years health services spanning antenatal, maternal and child health, and early parenting.

Additional funding is also provided to support four new Early Parenting Centres becoming operational in 2023.

- ◆ **Early Parenting Centre – Shepparton - \$3 million in 2022-23 (\$25 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to construct a 10 bed early parenting centre in Shepparton. It will provide specialist support and deliver flexible, targeted services for families with children up to four years of age to enhance the parent-child relationship and support parents with strategies to achieve their parenting goals.

## Disability services

- ◆ **Strengthening Victoria’s interface with the National Disability Insurance Scheme - \$66.9 million in 2022-23 (\$99 million over two years)**

This measure includes funding provided to services and programs to support Victorians with disability who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), including youth justice specialist disability advisers.

This initiative will deliver on the Government’s commitment to continue to provide support to existing Victorian disability services’ clients who have not been able to transition to the NDIS. This will also support non-permanent residents to access Early Childhood Intervention Services.

- ◆ **Victorian State Disability Plan - \$14.6 million in 2022-23 (\$15.1 million over two years)**

This measure includes further funding for the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program. This will support people with disability through increasing access to advocacy and ensuring equitable access to services, including the NDIS.

## Housing and homelessness

- ◆ **Investing to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring - \$8.3 million in 2022-23 (\$51.3 million over three years)**

Funding is provided to reform elements of the homelessness service system, shifting to a delivery model that provides tailored support and is focused on prevention, early intervention and sustainable housing. Victorians experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping will receive support through intensive flexible case management aimed at addressing a wide range of factors that act as barriers to exiting homelessness, such as substance abuse and poor mental and physical health. Funding is also provided for an uplift in case management and data collection tools.

- ◆ **Sustained support and improved housing outcomes - \$4.6 million in 2022-23 (\$9.4 million over two years)**

This measure includes funding to continue the Holmesglen Education First Youth Foyer operated by Launch Housing. The Youth Foyer provides an integrated accommodation and education

response for young people aged 16 to 24 who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness, and are committed to pursuing education and training.

## Workforce, service delivery and reform

- ◆ **Supporting community sector jobs - \$18.6 million in 2022-23 (\$63.8 million over four years)**

Additional funding is provided to help community service organisations that deliver social services on behalf of the Government to cover the impacts of minimum wage and consumer price index cost increases.

- ◆ **Establishing the Social Services Regulator - \$0.3 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided for the Suitability Panel to conclude investigations as part of the transition and implementation of legislative reforms under the new *Social Services Regulation Act 2021*.

- ◆ **Funding for statutory bodies and reforms - \$4.9 million in 2022-23 (\$9.8 million over two years)**

This measure includes funding for the implementation of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021*. As a result of these legislative reforms, additional support is required to set up information sharing systems and compliance and enforcement frameworks and make necessary organisational changes. Regulators will also communicate the reforms to around 50,000 regulated entities and community members, providing revised sector guidance and educational information.

- ◆ **Strengthening the community services workforce - \$3.5 million in 2022-23 (\$7 million over two years)**

Funding is provided for an attraction and recruitment campaign that raises the profile of the community services workforce.

Funding is also provided for scholarships to increase education and training pathways for underemployed cohorts and those with lived experience interacting with social services. These initiatives remove barriers to entry to the community services workforce and increase the pipeline of graduates and diversity in community services.

- ◆ **Civil claims costs for historical institutional child abuse - \$25.3 million in 2022-23**

Funding is provided for the settlement of civil claims for historical institutional child abuse suffered by former wards of the State while in the State's care.

For further details about the Victorian Budget 2022-23, visit:

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

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<sup>i</sup> Content in this quick guide is largely included verbatim from Budget Paper no. 3.

Department of Treasury and Finance 2022, [Victorian budget 2022/23 – Putting patients first: Service delivery – Budget paper no. 3](#), Victorian Government, Melbourne.