

# Victorian State Budget 2024-2025 Analysis

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

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare has prepared this detailed summary of the key budgetary measures and investments for member organisations working in child and family services.

### Supporting families

#### ***Strong Families, Safe Children – Budget investment \$197.6 million over 2 years***

Funding is provided for family services to reduce the number of children and young people who need more intensive or statutory services, including supporting children and young people to remain with their families or return home. Funding continues for the Family Preservation and Reunification Response program including enablers such as the Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN). Innovative service models such as Putting Families First, family group conferencing and Early Help family services will also receive further funding.

#### ***School Saving Bonus – Budget investment \$281.6 million in 2024-2025***

This one-off bonus is designed to help families with cost-of-living expenses by providing a \$400 allowance for all public school students to help cover the costs of uniforms, excursions, sporting events and other expenses.

#### ***Free breakfast for all Government school students – Budget investment \$21.1 million in 2024-25***

Funding will expand the School Breakfast Club Program to every government school in Victoria with 150 additional schools being invited to join the program in early 2025, before the program is rolled out to remaining schools from June 2025.

#### ***Glasses for Kids programs to more schools – Budget investment \$6.8 million in 2024-2025***

This is a significant investment enabling an additional 74,000 Prep to Grade 3 students across 473 government schools to access free eye checks and glasses.

*Strengthening food security across Victoria – Budget investment \$3.5 million in 2024-2025*

A statewide grant program will enable efficient food distribution across metropolitan and regional areas, including sustaining the operations of six Regional Food Relief Hubs. Additionally, local community-led food security initiatives will be supported through an open grant program delivered through a range of local providers including volunteer organisations and neighbourhood houses.

***Social housing community support – Budget investment \$1.1 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to deliver food relief to social housing residents, including in the high-rise towers.

***Energy affordability and protecting consumers – Budget Investment \$12.1 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to maintain the Victorian Energy Compare website which assists consumers in searching for the cheapest retail electricity and gas deal. The Energy Assistance Program will also be continued to support vulnerable energy customers navigating the retail energy market.

## **Out-of-home care and carers**

***Delivering child protection and care services – Budget investment: \$128.1 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to deliver service provision in the statutory child protection and care services systems through:

- supports for child protection workforces to respond to safety concerns for children through key strategic workforce programs and advertising campaigns
- continuing funding for litigation solicitors and administrative support staff, support workers in the centralised subpoena office, and safety checks for adult household members in kinship care placements
- responding to the need for residential care placements to support children and young people
- improving cross-jurisdiction information sharing and supporting the Family Violence National Framework
- supporting evidence-based service models for Aboriginal-led statutory and non-statutory child and family services.

***Improving outcomes for children and young people in home-based care – Budget investment \$58.6 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided for Care Support Help Desk teams, the Care Hub, kinship case contracting and the CaringLife app to support kinship and foster carers and children and young people in care.

***Victorian Social Investment Model – Budget investment \$1 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to continue the Victorian Social Investment Model, which draws on data across government departments to inform more effective early intervention investments.

## **Family violence**

***Self-determined justice diversion and family violence supports – Budget investment \$16.3 million over 3 years***

There is funding for ACCOs to provide culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal children and families experiencing family violence, including specialist after-hours family support for Aboriginal victim survivors and perpetrators of family violence. Funding will also enable delivery of Aboriginal youth diversion programs.

***Respectful Relationships for children and youth – Budget investment \$39.1 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided for the Respectful Relationships program to support schools and early childhood educators to promote respectful and positive attitudes and behaviours as a core component of the Victorian curriculum. It also includes professional development for early childhood educators to support teaching children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence and funding partnerships with Safe and Equal, Jesuit Social Services and the Pat Cronin Foundation to support delivery.

***Driving down family and sexual violence – Budget investment \$41.6 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to continue delivery of the perpetrator case management program with individualised and timely interventions to reduce risk. This includes responses and specialised intervention programs for diverse cohorts. Funding will continue to be provided for research to inform evidence-based policy and program development for prevention of family violence.

***Family violence victim survivors supports – Budget investment \$72 million over 2 years***

Funding is provided to support family violence victim survivors, including:

- case management, therapeutic interventions for children and young people, crisis brokerage, and flexible support packages for victim survivors on temporary visas

- operation of the core and cluster refuges, supported emergency accommodation for families with complex needs, post-crisis Short-Term Accommodation Response program at Berry Street, and Personal Safety Initiative responses to ensure safety of the victim survivors in their own homes
- staffing at peak body Sexual Assault Services Victoria, workforce capability building to improve responses to multicultural communities, and training packages for professionals and organisations to better respond to children and young people using family violence or experiencing family violence.

***Safer families: Central Information Point service – Budget investment \$24.3 million over 2 years***

Funding is provided for continued operation 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.

***Financial counselling support for victim survivors of family violence – Budget investment \$6.8 million over 2 years***

Funding is provided to continue delivering financial counselling services to family violence victim survivors facing financial stress.

***Community sector legal support and early intervention services – Budget investment \$8.7 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to continue early intervention programs which provide legal assistance for people experiencing hardship, including through:

- Community Legal Centre initiatives delivering Integrated Service Projects and early intervention Health Justice Partnerships
- programs delivered by Victorian Legal Aid, including the Help Before Court program that supports people to resolve their matter at their first hearing.

## **Education**

***Improving outcomes for Indigenous children – Budget investment \$8.9 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Victorian government schools. This includes increasing Aboriginal-led decision making in education, school-community partnerships, improving educational outcomes and experiences for Aboriginal Victorians, and sharing knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, communities and culture.

***Place-based education and wellbeing programs – Budget investment \$11.7 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided for a number of specific programs which provide place-based, localised support to ensure students can participate or re-engage in education. These include The Geelong Project, the Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement, Project REAL, Beyond the Bell, One Red Tree, Farm My School, Geelong Chances, the Education Benalla Program, and Academy Movement.

***Education support for students at risk – Budget investment \$36.7 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to continue and expand educational support for children in out-of-home care (OOHC) and children involved in or at-risk of involvement in the youth justice system. The funding includes tailored education support, health and education coordinators funding for LOOKOUT learning advisors, and the Education Justice Initiative.

***Innovative support to re-engage young people – Budget investment \$3.6 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to continue the innovative Living Learning (Partnership Addressing Disadvantage) program that provides integrated mental health, education, psychosocial and vocational support for young people in Victoria.

***Support for regional and small schools' outside school hours care – Budget investment \$14.7 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to support regional and small schools to continue and expand delivery of outside school hours care for primary school children.

***Innovative support to re-engage young people – Budget investment \$3.6 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to continue the innovative Living Learning (Partnership Addressing Disadvantage) program that provides integrated mental health, education, psychosocial and vocational support for young people in Victoria.

***Senior Secondary Pathways Reform – Budget investment \$37.6 million over 3 years***

This investment focuses on improving access to Vocational Education and Training delivered to students through the Job Skills and Pathways program. It also includes a pilot vocational experience program for senior students which will give them industry experience.

***Student health and wellbeing – Budget investment \$47.3 million over 3 years***

This funding will enable continuation of student support services, mental health support in schools and the primary school nurse program to improve student health and wellbeing.

## Disability

### ***Continuing support for Victorians with disability: Budget investment - \$24 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is continued for a range of supports for people with disability including coordination of mainstream supports for people with complex disability needs:

- Victorian Disability Advocacy program
- Supporting Victorians with disability ineligible for the NDIS
- Autism assessment grants
- Family Services Specialist Disability Practitioner program
- Steps to Confident Parenting program
- Parenting Children with Complex Disability program
- Supporting children with complex disability and their families to access mainstream supports.

### ***Additional Support for Students with Disabilities: Accessible Buildings Program – Budget investment \$7.5 million in 2024-25***

Funding is provided to improve access to school facilities for students with disability and additional needs. Facility modifications may include ramps and handrails, alterations toilet and shower facilities and adjustments for students with vision or hearing impairments.

### ***Students with Disabilities Transport Program – Budget investment \$32.8 million in 2024-2025***

Funding will enable expansion of the current program, with up to six new services from 2025 to meet growth in demand to support eligible students to travel to their government specialist school.

### ***Disability and Social Services Regulation – Budget investment \$21.6m in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to support the new independent Social Services Regulator, continue the work of the Disability Worker Commission and fund the functions of the Disability Services Commissioner.

### ***Supports for people with disability outside of the NDIS – Budget investment \$23.1 in 2024-2025***

This funding includes delivery of the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People, services for people who are not eligible for or who cannot have their needs met by the NDIS, and assessments for people seeking to have allied health supports in their NDIS Plans.

## Housing

### ***Breaking the cycle of homelessness – Budget investment \$196.9m over 4 years***

Funding will provide housing assistance for low-income families, older people, single people, young people, victim survivors of family violence and other households, delivering vital programs that support people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness, including:

- the establishment of a four-year competitive grants process from 2025-26 for homelessness services working to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring
- expanding Journey to Social Inclusion over four years; this is an innovative program that aims to end the cycle of chronic homelessness with long-term case management and access to rapid housing
- dedicated funding to address homelessness for Victoria's First Peoples, including through Housing First responses and self-determined approaches guided by Mana-na woorntyeen maar-takoort; Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home – The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework
- targeted support to meet critical demand for services providing support and accommodation to young people and women experiencing homelessness
- Homes for Families to provide a 'Housing First' response for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Better Health and Housing, a program providing accommodation and support to people with complex health needs
- the Homelessness After Hours statewide service, providing access to homelessness services and crisis responses outside of business hours
- continuation of Pride in Place, an innovative program partnering LGBTIQ+ and homelessness services to provide specialist support to LGBTIQ+ Victorians experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- continued support for the Richmond Youth Hub to deliver youth activities, engagement, safe spaces and support services through the Richmond Youth hub program.

### ***Rental Stress Support Package – Budget investment: \$8 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided to organisations delivering support for renters in the private market so that Victorian households facing rental stress can gain access to information and advice, advocacy and legal assistance.

### ***Modernising the delivery of public housing maintenance – Budget investment \$13 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to improve renter experience and satisfaction with public housing maintenance requests and delivery through an upgrade to Homes Victoria's technology systems.

## Healthcare

### ***Protecting the health of priority populations – Budget investment \$13.7 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided to prevent poor health in high-risk groups, including by providing HIV treatment for people who are not eligible for these services under Medicare, and to support peer-led sexual health and wellbeing services for sex workers. Funding is provided to continue the SunSmart Program in early childhood and primary school settings, aimed at preventing skin cancer.

### ***Preventative health support for Victorian Women – Budget investment \$18.3 million over 2 years***

Funding is provided to further support 12 organisations across Victoria to provide preventative health promotion to Victorian women focusing on sexual and reproductive health, cervical cancer screening, chronic illness, family violence and other health promotion initiatives

### ***Continuing Orygen’s Moderated Online Social Therapy (MOST) program – Budget investment \$6.4 million***

Funding will enable the continuation of Orygen’s Moderated Online Social Therapy (MOST) program, which provides young people aged 12-25 with personalised support. It can provide extra support alongside face-to-face treatment through access to self-directed therapeutic content, a safe moderated online community, peer workers, careers counselling and one-on-one clinical support.

### ***New Youth Prevention and Recovery Care (YPARC) beds – Budget investment \$16 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided to open 20 newly constructed Youth Prevention and Recovery Care (YPARC) beds in Heidelberg and Traralgon, providing treatment, care and support to young people aged 16-25 experiencing mental health challenges and psychological distress. These facilities are part of a \$141 million capital investment to deliver new and refurbished YPARC beds across the state.

### ***Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands: Strengthening cultural safety and supporting culture and kinship – Budget investment \$10.8m over 4 years***

Funding is provided to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to deliver an expanded Culture and Kinship program, reconnecting young Aboriginal Victorians to their culture, identity, history and spirituality, to improve physical and mental health

### ***Supporting paediatric care through the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service – Budget investment \$4.1 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to continue the delivery of paediatric services by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.



## Early Years

### ***Early childhood intervention services for non-permanent residents – Budget investment \$2.9 million in 2024-2025***

Funding is provided to deliver early childhood intervention services, such as inclusive education and therapy supports, to children with a disability or developmental delay who are not eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) due to their residency status.

### ***Strengthening participation of CALD children in early childhood education – Budget investment \$9.4 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided to continue and extend targeted outreach support for children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access and engage in kindergarten.

### ***Best Start Best Life and Three-Year-Old Kindergarten – Budget investment \$128.6 million in 2024-2025***

Funding continues for the Best Start, Best Life reforms, continuing to deliver the rollout of Three Year Old kinder and to support families with Free Kinder for three- and four-year olds.

### ***Maternal and Child Health and Early Parenting Services – Budget investment \$28.8 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided to continue supporting every Victorian family with young children during the early years of development by ensuring access to Universal, Enhanced and Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health programs and associated services, including the Maternal and Child Health line after-hours, baby bundles, and the Nursery Equipment Program.

## Youth Justice

### ***Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Project – Budget investment \$6.6 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to Victoria Police to continue and expand the Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Project, which aims to reduce rates of reoffending among young people by providing for increased early intervention measures.

### ***Supporting the corrections system to improve community safety – Budget investment \$52.6 million over 4 years***

Funding is provided to reduce recidivism and improve prisoners' reintegration in the community, including through:

- support for women to maintain or develop strong family connections while in custody and help for victim survivors of family violence
- culturally safe support programs to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people
- programs that improve job prospects for people on community orders and reduce reoffending, including education, training and employment services, and for the Kickstart program to help address substance issues
- trauma-informed, gender-responsive supports for women in custody, short-term accommodation and transitional support for men exiting prison.

***Self-determined justice diversion and family violence supports – Budget investment \$16.3 million over 3 years***

Funding is provided under the Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF) to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver a range of programs to reduce interactions with the justice system and support Aboriginal women and families experiencing family violence, including youth diversion programs

***Enhanced Youth Justice bail supervision and support – Budget investment \$30.8 million over 6 years***

Funding is provided to establish a two-year metropolitan-based pilot to enhance the capacity of Youth Justice to monitor and support young people on bail. The pilot will enable electronic monitoring to be part of bail conditions ordered by a court and allow more comprehensive supervision of serious and repeat young offenders.

***Youth justice (custodial services)***

Funding is provided to support the operation of the Youth Justice System, including through:

- culturally responsive services to support Aboriginal young people in custody
- specialised support for young people with diagnosed disabilities
- behaviour support specialists and training programs to support Youth Justice staff.

## **Redress**

***Civil claims costs for historical institutional child abuse and care leavers: Budget investment of \$111.4 million***

Funding is provided for the settlement of civil claims for historical institutional child abuse suffered by former wards of the State while in care. There is also funding to continue support for people who lived in institutional care in Victoria prior to 1990.

***Victorian redress for historical abuse and neglect in institutional care: Budget investment of \$165 million***

Funding is provided to establish a new redress scheme for Victorians who were placed in institutional care prior to 1990 and experienced physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect (pre-1990 care leavers).

For more information on the Victorian State Budget 2024-2025 visit [www.budget.vic.gov.au](http://www.budget.vic.gov.au)