MEDIA RELEASE

VICTORIAN BUDGET DELIVERS FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES

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The Centre for Excellence welcomes the Andrews Government's strong focus on supporting vulnerable children and families in the 2016 Budget, with a recommitment to tackling family violence, as well as additional investment in mental health services and specialist education support.

"The Victorian State Budget confirms the Government's commitment to tackle family violence, incorporating its first-phase $572 million investment over two years," CEO Deb Tsorbaris said today.

"It is particularly pleasing that this is just the start, with the Government committing to a ten-year Family Violence Plan that will help to ensure a sustained focus on what is an entrenched and far-reaching problem in our community.

"As part of its family violence package, the Budget reconfirms the Government's $168 million investment in the *Roadmap for Reform*, which will shift the focus of child protection from one of crisis to early intervention and prevention.

"The Centre is pleased to be invited to join the Ministerial Advisory Council which will work with the Government on design and implementation of the Roadmap."

Ms Tsorbaris also welcomed significant additional investment in mental health, with $356 million earmarked for improved access to services and for prevention strategies, including a strong focus on mental health support for children, young people and parents.

"So often, vulnerability and mental ill health go hand-in-hand – it's crucial that vulnerable children and young people can access the mental health support they need in order to reach their full potential and for parents to get the treatment and support they need so they can properly care for their children.

"For vulnerable and at risk children, access to quality education from an early age is crucial to their development and in many instances to keeping them safer.

"The Centre also welcomes a number of key education initiatives in the budget that will help ensure more kids are better able to access quality education from an early age, which is so crucial to their development and wellbeing.

"It is also pleasing to see a range of specific initiatives focused on supporting Aboriginal young people and families, with the Budget reaffirming the Government's support for Aboriginal self-determination.

"We look forward to working with the Andrews Government to give every Victorian child the best possible chance to thrive."

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Budget highlights that support children and families include:

Family Violence

- $572 million over two years as a first step to address family violence and deliver on 65 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence's most urgent recommendations. This includes $168 million towards the *Roadmap for Reform* to bring about changes to the child protection system including transforming the residential care system into a clinical treatment model, support for new mums to care for their babies, counselling services to child and adult family violence survivors, more child protection workers and increased training for foster carers
- Development of a comprehensive 10-year Family Violence Plan in conjunction with victims, survivors and the people and organisations that support them

Youth and Family Services

- $18 million over four years to provide incoming refugees with access to key services to support themselves and their families
- $6.73 million in new funding over two years to expand the Youth Justice Bail Supervision Program, with four additional youth justice workers and additional diversion support through the Children's Court

Education

- $45.3 million over the next four years to fund 398 packages for school leavers with a disability
- $92 million for ten Tech Schools at TAFEs and universities across Victoria and $21.3 million to support vocational education and training
- $43.8 million for the Doctors in Secondary School program
- $68.5 million to upgrade 20 specialist schools
- $10 million to build kindergartens and children's centres in fast-growing areas, bringing together a range of children and family services. A further $4.4 milllion over four years for kindergartens in rural communities

Health

- $356 million investment in mental health, with a focus on providing better access to services and investing in prevention, including:
    - $57.3 million for the expansion of the Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness program to an additional ten area mental health services, providing statewide coverage
    - $27.5 million for new suicide prevention initiatives
    - $59 million to rebuild Orygen Youth Mental Health clinic and research facility in Parkville
    - $14.6 million for a new Early in Life Mental Health Service in conjunction with Monash Medical Centre

- $8.4 million for a new 12-bedroom Women's Prevention and Recovery Care Service for women with an acute mental illness in the north and west of Melbourne, also capable of accommodating up to three young dependent children
- $7.3 million for a new state-wide Child and Family Mental Health Intensive Treatment Centre which will house three independent living units able to accommodate up to 12 people, including children and families

- $1.15 million to expand the Healthy Equal Youth grants which provide positive mental health programs for young people in the LGBTI community – as part of $29 million investment in services and facilities for LGBTI Victorians

Community Services

- $152 million 'housing blitz' for women and children escaping family violence
- $75.4 million for community facilities and spaces including $50 million for community facilities in Melbourne's fastest-growing suburbs such as community centres, parks and playgrounds
- $4.5 million for the Kangan Youth Foyer in Broadmeadows over three years to assist young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness to continue training and education opportunities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support

- $25.7 million to work with Aboriginal communities in addressing family violence, as part of the Family Violence package
- $875,000 for a new Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program to help young Aboriginal people develop relationships and networks that keep them connected to culture, family and friends