Centre for Excellence
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

Victorian Budget 2016

A strong property market and population growth has allowed the Government to deliver a budget with significant spending on infrastructure and services.

Topline highlights include:

- Infrastructure investment of $7.4 billion a year on average, with the majority going to roads and public transport
- $2.9 billion investment in Victoria's health care system
- $924 million investment in new and upgraded school infrastructure and $92 million for ten Tech Schools
- $53 million to create Jobs Victoria, a one-stop-shop to help 3500 unemployed Victorians find and keep work and 4000 people find work experience.

The Government has described family violence as Victoria's 'number one law and order issue', with the Budget reconfirming its commitment of $572 million to 'begin the development of a world-class family violence system and meet urgent service demand'.

The Budget includes significant spending in the social services space, with a range of commitments aimed at supporting children and families. Some key initiatives are listed below.

Family Violence

The Budget includes the Government's promised $572 million over two years as a first step to address family violence. This has been earmarked for 65 of the most urgent recommendations out of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The package includes:

- $152 million for housing for women and children escaping family violence
- $122 million to keep children safe (see *Roadmap for Reform* initiatives below)
- $104 million for specialist family violence services (crisis support, counselling, services for diverse communities)
- $61.6 million for family violence prevention, including expanding the Respectful Relationships program and introducing Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy
- $25.7 million to work with Aboriginal communities to address family violence
- $23.9 million for reforms to the justice system to better protect victims and hold perpetrators to account, including expanding legal services for victims, more men's behaviour change programs and improving victims' experience at court.

Crucially, the Government has committed to developing a comprehensive 10-year Family Violence Plan in conjunction with victims, survivors and the people and organisations that support them. This will be released later in the year.

The Budget includes the following initiatives to lay the groundwork for the 10-year plan:

- $32.5 million for safeguarding and sharing information between services
- $19 million for a 'family violence navigator' to guide victims through crisis and recovery
- $15.4 million for an independent monitor, an implementation unit and to support a Victim Survivors Advisory Council, Family Violence Steering Committee and consultation process
- $10.4 million to build the capacity of the family violence workforce and support other works to identify and respond to family violence
- $5 million to start work on 17 Support and Safety Hubs

Roadmap for Reform: strong families, safe children

The Government's Family Violence package includes $168 million over two years towards the *Roadmap for Reform* with a focus on 'prevention, early intervention and creating services that are coordinated and work together to meet the needs of vulnerable families and children'.

The investment includes:

- $35.9 million to transform residential care into a treatment model that focuses on early intervention to help children recover from abuse, neglect and family violence
- $34.2 million to increase the number of foster and kinship carers (additional 857 kinship, foster and permanent care placements over two years)
- $25.5 million for services including counselling to family violence and sexual assault victims
- $8.5 million to expand trauma-informed interventions, including counselling for child family violence victims
- $3.4 million for additional child protection workers
- $16.2 million to increase support to carers of children in out of home care, including equipment, home alterations or training to help care for children with complex needs
- $16.5 million to ensure Aboriginal children and young people who can't live with their immediate family maintain links with their culture, as well as to recruit additional Aboriginal kinship and foster carers
- $2.3 million for urgent, essential and planned maintenance of residential care facilities.
- $6.73 million to expand the Youth Justice Bail Supervision Program, with four additional youth justice workers and additional diversion support through the Children's Court

Education

The Budget invests $924 million in new and upgraded schools. This includes:

- $92 million for ten Tech Schools (Ballarat, Banyule, Bendigo, Casey, Geelong, Gippsland, Monash, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra Ranges regions), as well as $20 million to support young people and early school leavers to undertake foundation training
- $68.5 million to upgrade 20 specialist schools
- $50 million for community hubs in growth areas to allow for greater use of school assets outside of school hours

There is also $151 million for early years learning and development including:

- $133 million for maternal and child health services
- $10 million to build and plan for new early learning facilities in growth areas
- $4.4 million for small rural kindergartens

Other education initiatives include:

- $87.3 million to support an extra 1750 students eligible for the Program for Students with Disability
- $45.3 million over the next four years to fund 398 packages for school leavers with a disability
- $43.8 million for the Doctors in Secondary School program

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 a $29 million investment in services and facilities for LGBTI Victorians

Community Services

- $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 community 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