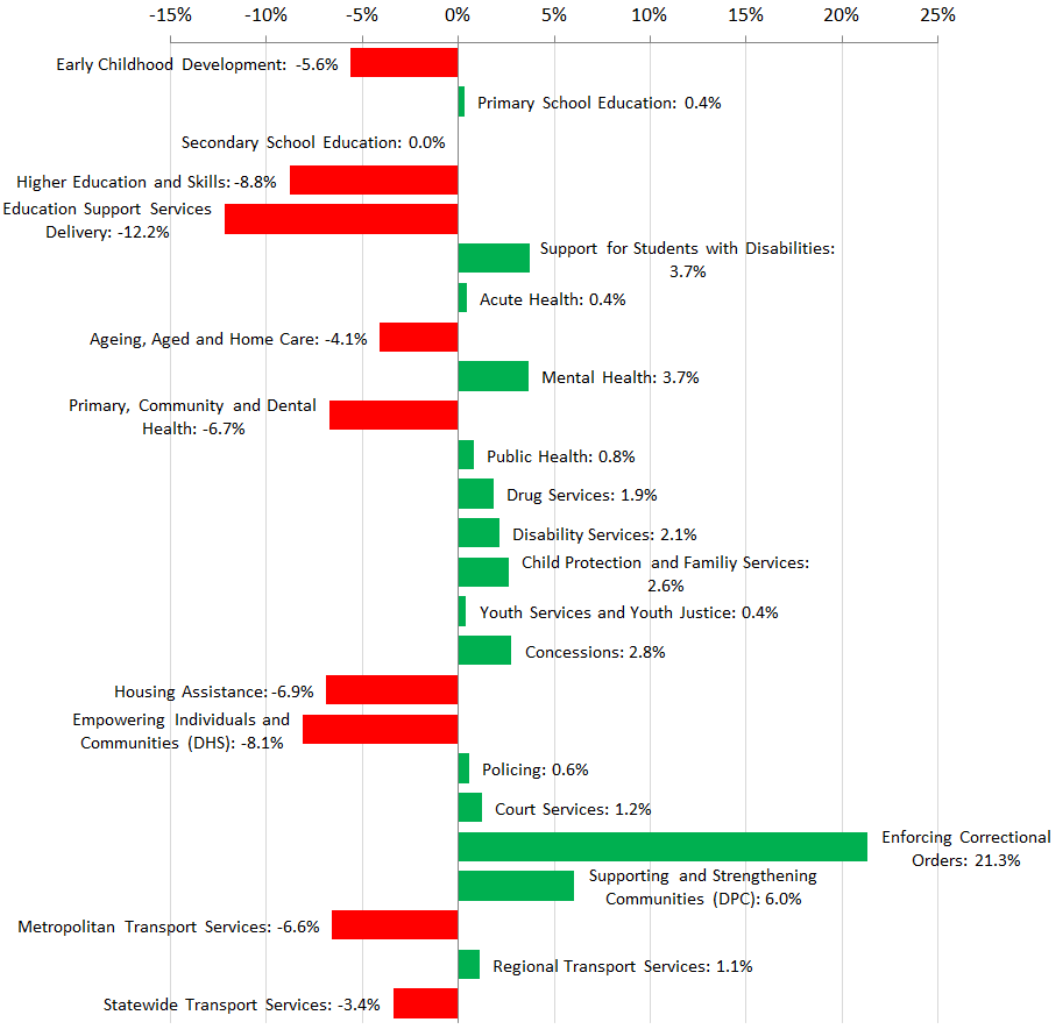
Victorian State Budget 2014-2015

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare was represented at the stakeholder Budget lock-up on Tuesday 6th May and at the briefing by Ministers held on Tuesday 7th May. Mary Woodridge, Heidi Victoria and Wendy Lovell gave an overview of initiatives in the relative portfolios.

Media analysis of the Victorian State Budget 2014-2015 has concentrated on the significant investment in infrastructure. Investment in service delivery is variable. The chart below (VCOSS: 2014) shows variability from the 2013-2014 Budget across programme areas and takes into account CPI and population growth. Variability of expenditure year on year is high as different policy initiatives, priorities and programmes are reflected in the Budget allocations. The Minister has identified a growth of 5.5% in the DHS Budget for this year and points to a faster than average growth in the portfolio than the overall budget in the last four years. Total initiatives amount to $117.6 million with $25.9 million found from existing resources,

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc. 100 Years 1912–2012

Real Effective Change Table



Key Themes

Several key themes emerge from the Budget for those with an interest in child and family services

- The gain for vulnerable children and families is to be found across the portfolio areas.
- Despite criticism from VAGO on the management of demand in residential care there appears no major demand response in the Budget for residential care.
- There is money for local area networked service delivery through Services Connect, Child FIRST, Early Childhood Services and Family Violence money; the Minister described this as seeking a balance between service reform and responding to demand.
- The Out of Home Care Plan commitment to new methods of commissioning and service design find expression in the Budget: the proposals around child first, family violence and services connect, the reference to the secure units and the home based care initiatives which might allow for bundling of the allocations for individualised packages approach.

- Some vital services expected to sunset have been refunded- examples are the Aboriginal Kinship Care Program, the Youth Support Service diverting young people in Juvenile Justice and Good Shepherd's Good Money outlets.
- Kinship Care and a major response to demand in family support services remain priorities to be addressed in the Centre's election platform.
- Housing public and social : a small increase in the number of households housed is forecast as a result of the expenditure in this portfolio. However services report lack of housing is severely impacting the capacity of child and family services to maximise the impact of their work.

Allocations of interest

Child First and Family Services

Twenty Four million (24.1 million) was allocated to 23 additional child protection workers to meet demand in high needs areas and Child FIRST. The Child First money will be applied to developing a Services Connect approach for diversion of families away from the child protection system. It is anticipated that an EOI process will be applied to the commissioning of these services.

The Budget Papers identified a particular focus on

- children exposed to family violence
- children subject to multiple resorts.

The Minister identified in her briefing

- young people in danger of entering care and
- young people leaving care.

Six hundred (600) additional interventions are expected to be delivered through this funding. This compares to the demand illustrated in Table 1 below where an additional 1873 unfunded episodes of service were provided by these services in 2013-2014.

Table 1. Increasing referrals to and increasing performance by Child FIRST

Year	Total Referrals[1]	% referrals from police[2]	Target Performance[3]	Expected Outcome[4]	Actual Performance[5]
2014-2015			11171(funds increased)		
2013-2014	3890(1st Q)	7.3% (1st Q)	9870	12393	
2012-2013	15,985	4.9%	9870 (demand increase)	10,684	10,780
2011-2012	15,473	1.6%	9000	9870	9709
2010-2011	14,199	1.56%	9000 (funds increased)	9190	9814
2009-2010	12,683	.99%	6000	9000	8865

Integrated local area service networks - Services Connect into the sector

Nearly eighteen million ($17.8 million) will be **allocated to 8 sites across Victoria** in areas of high need to enable community services to link through to Services Connect. There will be an announcement about this shortly. There is expected to be an EOI process. In briefings the Minister has made efforts to assure stakeholders that there is not a preconceived notion about how these trials will operate but that they are looking for innovative proposals from the sector which seek to integrate family violence, Child FIRST and Services Connect. The Minister described this as building the service system linkages from the ground up.

Family Violence

Twenty three million ($22.7 million) has been allocated for workforce education, and collaboration and support. The Strengthening Risk Management Demonstration models are to be expanded to the same 8 Services Connect Sites thus providing further resources for cross program networked service delivery**.** There is additional funding for expanding sexual assault support and counselling services for children and women**.**

[1] IRIS Data
[2] ibid
[3] State Government of Victoria, Victorian Budget 2010-2011, Service Delivery Paper No. 3; State Government of Victoria, Victorian Budget 2011-2012, Service Delivery Budget Paper No..3; State Government of Victoria, Victorian Budget 2012-2013, Service Delivery Budget Paper No.3; State Government of Victoria, Building for Growth, Victorian Budget 2013-2014, Service Delivery Budget Paper No.3.
[4] ibid
[5] State Government of Victoria, Victorian Budget 2010-2011, Service Delivery Paper No 3, State Government of Victoria Victorian Budget 2011-2012, Service Delivery Budget Paper No.3; State Government of Victoria Victorian Budget 2012-2013, Service Delivery , Budget Paper No.3. State Government of Victoria Victorian Budget 2013-2014, Service Delivery Budget Paper No 3., State Government of Victoria Victorian Budget 2014-2015, Service Delivery Budget Paper No 3.

Linking the 3 elements of funding (Child FIRST/Family Services, Family Violence and Services Connect)

We estimate that the new funds will represent approximately $1,275M per annum in new service delivery capacity in each of the eight locations:

	Total over 4 years	Per annum	Per DHS catchment (8) per annum
New Family Services Funding	$13,000,000	$3,250,000	$406,250
New Services Connect Funding	$9,800,000	$2,450,000	$306,250
New Family Violence Funding	$18,000,000	$4,500,000	$562,500
Total	$40,800,000	$10,200,000	$1,275,000

Out of Home Care

Home Based Care

$38 million has been allocated for additional home based care placements, caregiver reimbursements and client expenses. The breakdown of these is not known.

Residential Care

From the same allocation two eight bed units will be built under a new model of residential care accommodating regular and secure care available on site. This opens the possibility of provision of secure care by a non government or other provider. Secure units have traditionally been operated by Government while there is only one government operated residential care service .

Other portfolios

Disability support

DEECD An additional $273 million will provide disability support through the PSD program. This was a key area identified in our recent forum with OZChild around Children with a Disability in Child and Family Services. This represents additional support to carers and families. This is estimated to impact 23,500 students through additional hours and supports as well as for new students. An additional $32 million has been allocated to the Student Disabilities Transport program.

An additional $1.2 million over two years for additional early intervention for children with a disability or developmental delay.

Early Childhood

About $8,4 million has been allocated over four years for the Victorian Early Years Strategic plan for improving outcomes for Children from anti-natal to eight year old. The plan has vulnerable children as one of its three priorities and actions and

outcomes measures directly related to the wellbeing of families and children supported through our services.

Residential detox for young mothers. A four bed detox facility to be run by ReGen will provide direct support for young mothers whose continuing care of their infants might be at risk. This is a significant intervention in the preventative space and has been identified as a key priority by family services providers over many years. They are said to be the first residential detox beds for over ten years.

Sector Support

There is a further allocation to support commitment to the Fair Work Australia pay equity decision. Thirty five million ($35.3 million) has been allocated in the DHS portfolio as with other funded services in porfolios impacted by the decision).

Pay roll tax: Some discussion from Government has indicated that child and family services might benefit by the payroll tax relief. This is really not the case for our sector. Most organisations providing services are registered charitable organisations and are exempt under Section 48 of the Act and many smaller community based service organisations fall under the free range of $550,000 pa payroll.