



**The Hon Luke Donnellan**  
Minister for Child Protection

Tuesday 24 November 2020

## **SUPPORTING YOUNG VICTORIANS – AND THEIR FUTURE**

This global pandemic has dented too many young people's optimism and ambition for the future.

We want to fix that – giving every young Victorian every reason to be confident, particularly those young people who need some extra support as we recover from this pandemic.

In an Australian first, the Andrews Labor Government will ensure that every young person in out-of-home care can receive support up to the age of 21, making sure they have the stable foundation to begin their lives.

Part of our more than \$1 billion *Victorian Budget 2020/21* investment in children and families, \$64.7 million will make the landmark Home Stretch program universal – extending state supports from 18 to 21 years.

Home Stretch provides an accommodation allowance so a young person can remain living with their kinship or foster carer if they wish, or transition to supported independent living arrangements. From 1 January 2021, that support will continue up to the age of 21 for every young Victorian in out-of-home care.

To bolster this support, the Labor Government is also investing \$10.3 million in the Better Futures program, which provides young people in care with a range of tailored supports, helping them to prepare for life after care – including education and employment advice, and life-skills coaching.

To ensure every young Victorian has a safe place to call home if they need to live away from their parents, the Budget will also deliver more therapeutic and intensive support in Victoria's residential care system.

As part of this, close to \$16 million will expand the successful Keep Embracing Your Success (KEYS) program. KEYS is an intensive, trauma-informed model of care for children with mental health and complex needs, and includes therapeutic treatment as well as life-skills development to enable a transition back to home-based care.

A further \$9 million will establish 'Care Hubs' to provide wrap-around support for children entering residential care for the first time as well as sibling groups – giving kids a greater sense of security and reuniting families earlier.

The Budget provides \$45.4 million to build an extra 25 two and three-bedroom residential care homes and deliver capital upgrades and maintenance for up to 134 care service properties to ensure young people are placed in homes that are modern, comfortable and suited to their needs.

Another \$90.2 million is being invested in targeted care packages across the care system to provide tailored and individual support for children and their carers, preventing entry into residential care.

Giving families who are under pressure or in crisis the tools they need to support their children and stay together is essential to reducing the number of children requiring state care.

In line with the *Roadmap for Reform* – the Government's strategy to transform the children and families system with a focus on early intervention and prevention – to support this the Budget will deliver more than \$335 million, including funding for family preservation and restoration programs.

The Government will also invest an additional \$85.78 million in support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, including \$11.6 to establish Aboriginal-led family support teams at two pilot sites, helping local families and addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care.

Self-determination, and a strong sense of culture, identity and belonging are also critical to the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.

By ensuring Aboriginal children are in Aboriginal care and continuing to transition case management to Aboriginal community organisations, we're helping kids have a better opportunity to reach their full potential.

A \$15 million sustainability fund for community service organisations has also been established to support children and family service providers who may have been impacted financially during the pandemic – ensuring they can continue to deliver essential support for Victorians.

This Budget builds on the Labor Government's massive \$2.5 billion investment in new services, programs and supports in Child Protection since coming to office.

#### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan**

*"We know young people aren't always ready to leave home as soon as they turn 18. Now every young person in care, and their carers, can make that choice."*

*"Raising the age for care leavers to 21 is a hugely significant piece of reform and we're proud to be able to deliver it here in Victoria first."*

*"As we recover, we want to build a stronger, fairer Victoria – that begins with our young people and their future."*