



The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection

Thursday, 20 May 2021

TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE KIDS

We want all our kids to grow up safe and supported. But some families need some extra help.

It's why the Andrews Labor Government is providing more support than ever before for at-risk children, their families and their carers, as part of a massive \$1.2 billion boost for the children and families system in Victoria.

Not only will this support young Victorians and their families, it will also support more than 1,045 Victorians with a good, secure job.

This year's Budget delivers \$171 million to further increase the number of child protection workers on the frontline, with 280 new practitioners to be recruited – including 34 child protection navigators to connect children and families to the intensive family support they need.

That's on top of 239 new positions in last year's Budget – bringing the total to more than 1180 permanent new positions since 2014.

A new trial – Frontline Victoria – will also create a new fast-tracked path for degree-qualified career changers to move into a role within the child and families services system – strengthening the workforce and strengthening support for our kids.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* also includes a dedicated focus on early intervention, promoting strength and stability for at-risk families through a \$70 million boost to early intervention programs.

This means targeted specialist support for 500 extra families and embedding family services into universal settings such as schools and early years services.

This builds on the \$335 million in last year's Budget to transform the system with a new partnership model of evidence-based family services provided to those families identified as most at risk of requiring a future intervention by child protection.

A \$20 million investment in family group conferencing will also better protect our kids, bringing family members together to plan support for a child or young person.

Putting Families First – an \$18 million trial of multidisciplinary case management teams – will work directly with 200 families in Goulburn and Brimbank-Melton with multiple and complex needs to provide practical, personalised and targeted support.

Funding of \$31.5 million will continue transforming the way services are delivered for at-risk Aboriginal families, increasing the number of Aboriginal children who are case-managed and supported by Aboriginal organisations.

The Government is also increasing and strengthening support provided to valued kinship, foster and permanent carers through the \$101.8 million Reforming Care Services package.

This includes expanding the nation-leading Home Stretch and Better Futures programs to include young adults in permanent care who will also now receive state support up to the age of 21, and delivering additional training and support for permanent carers.

These investments follow the unprecedented \$1 billion boost in last year's Budget – including \$171 million to better support children and families by strengthening the residential care system, expanding the therapeutic Keep Embracing Your Success (KEYS) model and establishing new Care Hubs.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

“Nothing is more important than giving our most vulnerable children the stability, care and support they need. At the same time, we’re giving hundreds of Victorians the opportunity of a secure job, doing work that matters.”

“Building on last year’s unprecedented investment, we’ll keep working to transform the system to better meet the needs of children and families – that means significant funding and targeted early intervention.”

“We’re investing in more dedicated child protection workers and navigators to do their important work supporting families and kids, while boosting recruitment to secure a strong workforce for years to come.”