

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



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GIVING NEW VICTORIAN DADS THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

This Father's Day, the Andrews Labor Government is recognising the important, lifelong role dads play in their children's lives, delivering a \$2 million election commitment to create more dads groups across Victoria.

Part of a broader \$86 million package to support Victorian families in this year's *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, the funding will see grants awarded for the creation of new dads groups, including local council, community-led and after-hours groups, to provide support services to dads in the crucial first months of their baby's life.

The grants are also open to existing dads groups with the initiative established following an increasing demand from new dads wanting support to be the best parent and partner they can be.

Recognising the many challenges parenthood can present, the groups will focus on creating nurturing environments where dads from all backgrounds can connect, share experiences, and receive valuable support from their peers.

Ensuring the whole family is supported, the groups will also encourage a healthy family life, such as taking an active role in caregiving to help promote bonding and gender equality in parenting.

Further, they will share with new dads evidenced-based information on early childhood health and development, strategies for self-care and an increased awareness of their perinatal mental health.

The Labor Government is also supporting mums and new families with funding in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* to bolster free Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services, giving hardworking MCH nurses more time to support new parents.

Other critical investments supporting families with young children, include \$148 million to build or upgrade 10 Early Parenting Centres to help with sleep and settling, child behaviour and health and wellbeing, as well as funding to continue the Victorian Baby Bundle program.

Eligible organisations can apply for individual dads group grants of up to \$100,000, with applications open from Monday, 4 September until Monday, 16 October.

Applications for grants can be made at health.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"Having a baby completely changes your life and presents new challenges no one can prepare you for – that's why we are backing Victorian dads by ensuring they can access the support they need in a nurturing environment."

"No matter where dads meet, whether it is the park, at a local café or even online, we know dads groups will make a real difference in the lives of many fathers and their families."