

Media Release

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Children
Minister for Disability



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MORE DADS GROUPS TO SUPPORT VICTORIAN FATHERS

The Allan Labor Government is helping new Victorian dads feel supported and connected – awarding \$2 million in grants to 18 community organisations and local councils to establish more Dads Groups across the state.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn today visited grant recipient, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Cooperative (VACCA), to make the announcement that fulfils a 2022 election commitment to help more fathers navigate the challenges of early parenthood.

Located across Melbourne and regional Victoria, the recipients will establish new dads groups, tailored to the unique needs of their local community, while creating a nurturing environment where fathers from all backgrounds can connect, share experiences, and receive valuable support from other dads.

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

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

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

Face-to-face and online sessions will also be offered, while dedicated support for rainbow families, and tailored support for families with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds will be available to ensure every dad feels heard.

For groups like VACCA, culturally safe programs for Aboriginal fathers are also crucial, with the organisation using its grant to deliver dads' groups across 12 local government areas.

Focused on inclusivity for all dads of Aboriginal children – Aboriginal dads, non-Aboriginal dads and carers – each session will be open for up to 20 participants, for multiple sessions each year. They will also host a community day at the end of each program cycle for all participants and their wider families and communities.

Part of a broader \$86 million package in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, the Labor Government is backing more Victorian mums, dads, babies and families – acknowledging that while bringing a new baby home is a special time, it can be overwhelming and challenging too.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"We know that becoming a new parent can be the happiest time in a person's life, but it can also be challenging and overwhelming – that is why we are ensuring more dads can get the support they need."

"Dads groups will give new fathers an opportunity to explore any challenges in a safe and supportive environment, while building social connections with others who are going through a similar experience."

Quote attributable to Member for Preston Nathan Lambert

"Becoming a new parent is an incredible, life-changing experience, but it can also be stressful and challenging. Parents need a strong circle of support, and dads' groups like this will form an important part of that."

Media contact: Isobel Loschiavo 0431 963 479 | isobel.loschiavo@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Dads' Group Grant Recipients

- Aspendale Gardens Community Service Inc
- Brainwave Australia Ltd
- Brimbank City Council
- Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Inc.
- Cardinia Shire Council
- Casey City Council
- Corangamite Shire Council
- Goulburn Valley Family Care
- Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Multicultural Community Services Geelong Inc.
- Permanent Care and Adoptive Families Inc.
- Relationships Australia (Victoria) Limited
- Shire of Alpine (Alpine Shire Council)
- Sunbury Neighbourhood House Inc
- Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Cooperative Ltd (VACCA)