

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Mental Health

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Minister for Prevention of Family Violence



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SUPPORTING YOUNG VICTORIANS THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION

The Allan Labor Government is strengthening early intervention and mental health support for young Victorians – helping them stay engaged and connected with their communities as they approach adulthood.

Minister for Mental Health and Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt and Minister for Youth Natalie Suleyman today announced a \$33 million investment to boost youth early intervention services and community safety, including the roll out of new programs coordinated by the new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

A major \$26.7 million investment will expand the Community Forensic Youth Mental Health Service – which supports some of Victoria's most vulnerable and at-risk youth with specialist treatment and care.

Delivered by Bayside Health and Parkville Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service – the expanded program will offer more clinical assessments, treatment and assertive outreach to young people at high risk of offending so they can get the targeted, early intervention mental health care they need.

The expansion will also better coordinate the services available to at-risk youth so they can provide wrap around support earlier, including health and community services diverting them away from crime and the justice system.

As part of the VRU, a number of initiatives will also begin rolling out as part of this boost to early intervention and community safety.

Based directly on the VRU model in Glasgow and London, which successfully reduced violent crime over time by targeting the problems early, it is a bold new approach to tackle ways that children are offending and getting lured into violent crime. The programs involve the whole community, including young people.

The work of Victoria's Council on Bail, Rehabilitation and Accountability highlights that young people experiencing mental ill health or trauma and engaging in behaviours of concern, such as violence, are at high risk of offending.

That's why the Labor Government is investing in the VRU and these programs that intervene early when these risk factors are identified – to change the trajectory of young peoples' lives and divert them away from crime.

This includes a new Youth Mental Health Collaborative in the west metro region, backed by a \$300,000 investment – bringing together local services to better coordinate care, engagement with young people and their families and improve referral pathways.

It will bring together local state-funded services, local Headspace services, and any other relevant support services to examine and address any barriers to mental health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) care for young people, particularly those at risk of offending.

A further \$280,000 will embed a culturally appropriate clinician within the West Metro Community Support Group to provide trauma-informed mental health and AOD care for young people from a South Sudanese background.

The package will also add \$400,000 to Project Sunrise – a specialised, culturally tailored AOD initiative for young Victorians aged 12 to 34 from African communities and their families.

Funded through the Victorian African Communities Action Plan, the initiative has engaged more than 3,000 people across eight priority local government areas since 2021. This new funding continues the project's important community work by providing greater access to referrals, counselling and community education sessions.

For young Victorians who need extra help, more than \$6 million is being invested to create stronger employment pathways, broaden access to sport and recreation, and provide tailored mental health support.

Supported by the VRU, six community support groups in Dandenong, Casey, Cardinia, Melton, Brimbank, Wyndham, Banyule and the City of Melbourne will deliver a new youth employment program, opening training and job opportunities designed for multicultural young people.

The funding will also expand sports and recreation activities which will give young people structured, positive outlets that build belonging and keep them active and connected.

A one-off \$750,000 boost will support three South Sudanese Community Support Groups to meet increased demand, following the recent tragic, violent incidents that have deeply affected these communities.

This investment will put more bicultural youth workers on the ground and provide additional family support packages, making sure culturally appropriate help is available for young people and their families when they need it most.

This work is part of the Labor Government's broader early-intervention approach – linking young people with the supports, opportunities and community connections that help them thrive.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health and Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt

"The Community Forensic Youth Mental Health Service delivers vital support for young Victorians at high risk of offending and their families – that's why we're boosting funding so the expert team can continue its important work now and into the future."

"These investments will give young people earlier access to the right supports – from specialist mental health care to culturally informed family assistance, and early intervention – keeping them on the right track for a bright future."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Youth, Small Business and Employment Natalie Suleyman

"We're backing programs that open real pathways for multicultural young people – whether that's a first job, training, or a sporting program that builds confidence and connection."

"By strengthening community-based support, we're helping young people feel supported, engaged and set up for success in their local communities."