



2017 State Budget Overview
by the
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

September 27 2017

Message from the CEO

Dear YACWA Members,

We have conducted an overview and analysis of the available information from the recent 2017/18 State Budget, and extracted the key commitments and measures that we believe will have an impact on young people, their families and the workforce supporting them in Western Australia.

This budget has been quite mixed in terms of its overall positive output for young people. The main positive notes include:

- Significant investment in the public education system, including new and redeveloped schools, and increased levels of teachers, education assistants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers.
- Public infrastructure developments that have the potential to create jobs for young people.
- The development of new community based mental health facilities in Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Karratha, and an At-risk Youth Program in the Peel region.
- Freezing TAFE fee increases from 2018 and re-establishing some craft trade qualifications.
- The development of new women's refugees and more holistic programs to tackle the problem of family and domestic violence.
- The potential for the Target 120 program to be a positive template for removing young people from the juvenile justice system.

Despite these initiatives, there are a number of areas of concern in the budget, which will negatively impact on the disadvantaged young people in Western Australian society. Of particular concern are the significant rising costs in water, power, and transport costs, which have the potential to mean that low-income young people will increasingly struggle to afford other essential costs of living such as rent, food, education and internet.

Of further concern is the general lack of core focus on early intervention and prevention focus in areas such as mental health and alcohol and other drugs, and the \$5.8m cuts to mental health services run by NGOs. The cuts to mental health services may affect small-grant based early prevention, promotion and anti-stigma programs and there would be a significant negative impact if these were de-funded. Significant portions of funding have also been placed in crisis and acute services, as well as punitive and reactionary measures, such as the Methamphetamine Action Plan. These disregard the fact that critical early intervention and prevention techniques are key to disrupting problematic cycles for young people and therefore should be the primary focus.

YACWA would have liked to see:

- **More funding for early intervention and prevention strategies as the primary focus which are then supplemented by acute and crisis services.**
- **More of the burden of State's economic recovery to be carried by those who can afford it, such as the corporate sector, rather than by disadvantaged young people and families.**
- **A clear plan to address housing affordability and rising costs for young people.**
- **More emphasis and funding to be placed on community-based rehabilitative programs rather than reactionary and punitive measures.**

As a member-based organisation, your voice is important to us, and we encourage you to share your concerns and questions with us about how the budget will affect you and/or the young people you work with. We commit to conveying the questions and concerns of our members to Government, and, will continue to work with all levels of Government to help them achieve meaningful outcomes for young people.

Yours truly,



Ross Wortham
CEO
YACWA

To see the full details of the 2017 State Budget head to the following, click [here](#)

Contents:

The State of the Economy.....	5
Cost of Living.....	9
Education and Training.....	12
Health and Mental Health.....	14
Alcohol and Other Drugs.....	17
Family and Domestic Violence.....	19
Housing and Homelessness.....	21
Child Protection.....	23
Youth Justice.....	25
Other Measures.....	27

The State of the Economy

Introduction:

On Thursday the 7th of September, the State Government released its budget outlining confirmed spending over the last 12 months, and its plan for both spending and raising money over the future financial year. This section provides a snapshot of some important economic indicators.

The Basics:

2017/18 forecast Expenditure: \$30.8b

2017/18 forecast Revenue: \$28.5b

2017/18 forecast Deficit/Surplus: -\$2.3b

Unemployment rate for 2017/18: a 1.5% decrease compared to 2016/17

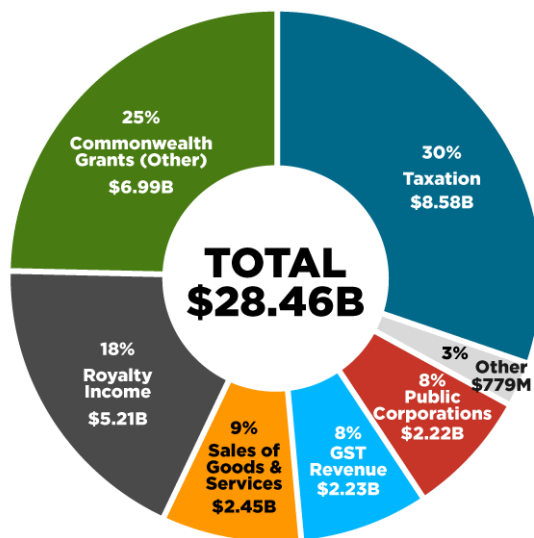
Where is the State Government money coming from and where is it being spent?



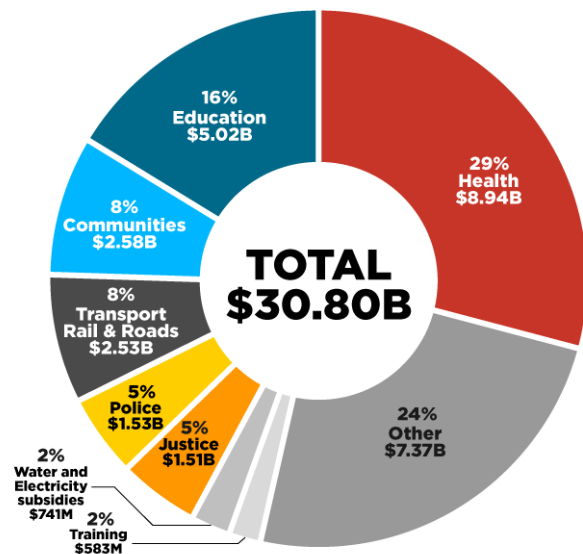
WA STATE BUDGET 2017-18

BUDGET OVERVIEW

2017-18 REVENUE
GENERAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR



2017-18 EXPENDITURE
GENERAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR



Note: Figures may not add due to rounding

Key Saving/Revenue Areas:

- \$1.7b in savings from the public sector including:
 - A new public sector wages policy.
 - Four-year wage freeze for positions determined by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal.
 - 20% reduction in the Senior Executive Service.
 - 40% reduction in the number of Government departments
 - Reduction of 3000 public servant jobs through voluntary redundancies.
 - No indexation for non-salary related expenditure.
- \$473m in net debt reduction targets for Government Trading Enterprises.
- **\$303m increased revenue from increases in fees and charges. For the average household of two adults and two children this means:**
 - **A \$169 increase in power bills annually.**
 - **A \$97 increase in water, sewerage and draining fees annually.**
 - **An \$80 increase in public transport fees.**
 - **A \$31 increase in vehicle licensing charges.**
- A 4% tax for foreign property buyers
- A surcharge on the purchase of residential properties.
- A 15% gambling tax on online betting companies
- A progressive payroll tax scale for large employers to be in place for five years. The new rate of 6% (currently 5.5%) for employers with a payroll over \$100 million and 6.5% for employers with a payroll over \$1.5b.
- Royalty income is due to increase by 3% compared to the 2016-17 budget as a result of an increase in the gold royalty rate to 3.75% when spot price is over \$1200/ounce.
- A 17% increase in the Pilbara Ports Authority port fees for the State's biggest companies.

Key Spending/Expenditure Areas:

The Government has outlined its key spending areas in an attempt to fulfil \$3.7b of election commitments. 83% (\$3.1b) of this will be funded from within the existing Budget through a reprioritisation of expenditure (including \$1.2b from the Perth Freight Link, \$674m from the Royalties for Regions program and \$571m from internal savings from Departmental budgets).

These include:

- \$1.34b over four years for the Government's flagship program METRONET including;
 - \$406m for the Forrestfield Airport link
 - \$520m for the Joondalup line to Yanchep
 - \$536m for the Thornlie to Cockburn line.

- A \$132m Methamphetamine Action Plan, including an \$83.5m Meth Border Force and a new alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre in the South West.
- \$465m allocation to education for;
 - 11 new schools and the redevelopment of old ones.
 - 300 more education assistants and an extra 120 teachers.
 - Specialised mental health programs for students.
- \$120m for an Aboriginal Ranger Program.
- \$61.7m over four years of mental health funding, including;
 - Community treatment services.
 - In-patient beds.
 - An at-risk youth program in the Peel region.
- Two new women's refuges and new financial consulting services to be established.
- \$1.7m expansion of services for Aboriginal and multicultural victims of domestic violence.
- \$120m upgrade to the Ocean Reef Boat Harbour, including \$35 million for this year.
- \$129m in new cycle paths.

Government's Stated Priorities:

Inevitably, Labor's priority in its first Budget since becoming government is fixing Western Australia's finances and removing the state's considerable debt. The current net debt is \$37.8 billion dollars and is expected to blow out to \$43.8 billion by 2019-20.

The Government's target is to return the budget to surplus in 2020-21, generating more revenue than expenditure for the first time since 2013-2014. This will result from a number of saving and revenue raising measures across the board, including priority areas of:

- Decreasing the size and spending of the public sector.
- Increases in certain taxes and royalties from the corporate sector.
- Increases in average household fees and charges.

The Government has outlined several key priorities in its budget including:

- Rolling out its flagship public transport program Metronet.
- Increases in funds to areas such as education, mental health and domestic violence.
- Infrastructure programs with the intention of creating jobs.

"This Budget strikes the balance of delivering on our election commitments, of creating jobs and getting the State's finances back on track. I am pleased to announce that this Budget will put us on the road to deliver a forecast surplus by 2020-21... the path to surplus is not an easy one. Tough decisions have been made and not all will be popular. But we have worked overtime to ensure that the burden of fiscal repair is shared as fairly as possible across the community." – Ben Wyatt, Treasurer, Budget Speech, 7 September 2017.

YACWA's Response:

While it is understandable that revenue needs to be raised in order to arrest the state's precarious economic position, YACWA is deeply concerned that these costs will put a heavy burden on low-income young people and families who already suffer high rates of housing stress in Western Australia. There were limited supporting concessions announced to match increases in household costs for those who spend a high proportion of their income on basic living costs such as rent, power, water and transport to lessen this burden.

This will disproportionately put the most vulnerable young people and families in society at increased danger of falling below the poverty line. **YACWA calls on the government to invest more into concessions for low-income young renters and families, and to hold an independent review of the impact of the increases on the most vulnerable in society.**

YACWA urges the Government ensure any cuts to public sector staff and departments are **not targeting critical services or funding that is allocated to assisting WA's most vulnerable young people. We also ask the government to clarify whether these cuts will affect the number of graduate positions for young people looking to establish a career in the public sector.** We hope however that the new jobs created by public infrastructure works such as the METRONET project, Ocean Reef Boat Harbour development and the development of new public schools will create jobs for young people. We ask the Government ensure that percentage of these jobs be made available for young people undertaking apprentices and newly starting out in a trade.

The current amalgamation of services and departments has shown promise but YACWA hopes the government will use this opportunity to foster a non-siloed and collaborative network of ministers, departments and programs that assist each other to tackle the many intertwined issues that affect young people in WA.

Further Information:

[Budget fact sheet on the state of the finances](#)
[Budget fact sheet on the Western Australian economy](#)
[Budget Paper No.1 - Treasurer, Minister for Finance, Energy and Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Ben Wyatt MSc MLA, Budget speech.](#)

Cost of Living

Overview

As was the case with last years budget, the government has announced a raft of increases to cost of living as part of this year's budget. These increases were announced on the 22nd of June however the reality of their impact is still being fully understood.

The household tariff, fee and charge increases include:

- A \$169 increase on electrical tariffs, or a 10.9% increase on the average household bill.
- A 6% increase in water, sewerage and drainage fees for 2017-18.
- A 1.8% increase in public transport standard fares.
- An increase in student fares from 60 to 70 cents.
- A 5% reduction in the discount for SmartRider fares.
- A 2.8% increase in motor injury insurance.
- A 1.7% increase in drivers' licence fees.
- A 5.7% increase in vehicle licence charges.
- A 3.35% increase in the emergency services levy.

As a result, total expenditure for the 'representative household' on government goods and services in 2017-18 will be \$6,099.57; a \$439 or 7.7% increase from 2016-2017 levels.

There have also been some changes to concessions and subsidies for households that need assistance;

- A \$1.4m increase in net operating subsidies for electricity concessions, rebates and remote communities.
- A 28% increase in the Energy Assistance Payment (EAP) as part of the Utilities Concessions Package.
- An increase in funding for the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme (HUGS) from \$4.5 million to \$20 million.
- An 8% increase in the annual HUGS grant limit to \$581 and \$962 for those living above the 26th Parallel.
- An additional 1.1 million to fund the reintroduction of financial counselling into the HUGS process.
- 25% rebates for Seniors Card holders on water service charges, local government rates and underground electricity connection charges were capped at \$100 per household.

Just a bit of context:

While it is true that Western Australian utility charges are not as high as some other states in Australia, these increases represent a consistent growth of household charges passed onto consumers as shown by the last four years:

- In 2016, an increase of \$257 or 4.76% was applied.
- In 2015, an increase of \$198.54 or 3.81% was applied.
- In 2014, an increase of \$324.18, or 6.6% was applied.
- In 2013, an increase of \$234.98, or 4.93% was applied.

The 2017/18 increase in costs of living of 7.7% is alarmingly larger than previous years, and the impact of this on young renters and low-income families is concerning.

You can view previous last year's budget measures through the link [here](#).

Potential Impact:

- These fee, tariff and charge increases have the potential to have a significant negative impact on low-income young people and families, and potentially will push those with high levels of housing stress below the poverty line.
- The [Rental Affordability Snapshot 2017](#) shows that the current rental situation for households is currently dire for people on fixed incomes, including those with a disability, job seekers and single parents. These increases will only serve to worsen the situation of many of these households and negatively impact on the standard of living of many young people in Western Australia.

YACWA's Response:

Whilst it is understandable that the Government needs to increase its revenue base in order to fix the budget situation, YACWA calls on the Government to do more to support the most vulnerable young people in our community who are currently struggling with high levels of unemployment, underemployment and housing stress. YACWA supports WACOSS's call to **commit additional resources to concessions and support for those who spend a much greater proportion of their income on their basic living costs, as well as an independent review of the adequacy and targeting of the increases.**

The current economic climate, employment opportunities, education and training costs, coupled with the high costs of rental properties has increased the financial pressure for many young people. The rise in Transperth fares, drivers licence fees, and vehicle licensing and insurance costs are of **particular concern to young people who constantly rely on public transport, as they are less likely to have a driver's licence or to be able to afford their own vehicle.** The impact of the increases means many young people may find that transport costs take up a much larger portion of their income and therefore they will have less money for basic costs such as rent, utilities and education.

Further Information:



[Treasurer, Minister for Finance, Energy and Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Ben Wyatt MSc MLA – Media Statement, cost of living increases](#)

[WACOSS fact sheet on household fees and charges](#)

[WACOSS Media Release – More Pain to come for Households](#)

News Article:

[Spending survey shows cost of essential living a burden – ABC News](#)

Education and Training

Overview:

The Budget papers have delivered \$124.1 million in spending to fund the WA Labor's election commitments to education. A range of increases have been announced, these include;

- 470 extra education jobs in public schools, including:
 - 300 Education assistants allocated to the most socially disadvantaged students.
 - 120 teachers
 - \$10.6 million over four years for 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education officers to be deployed in regional WA.
- Reinstatement of the 0.1 FTE attached to Level 3 classroom teachers over half the schools in the state.
- 300 schools to be provided with 0.1 FTE of Level 3 Teacher time to oversee the delivery of evidence based mental health programs.
- \$2m in funding for professional development programs that support the integration of coding into the curriculum, including website creation as well as computer software and app development.
- Specialist support for regional schools through:
 - The appointment of an Independent Learning Coordinator (ILC) in 10 regional schools to assist students undertaking courses through the School of Isolated and Distance Education
 - A regional Learning Specialist team in the curriculum areas of science, social science, mathematics and English which will be established to visit regional schools and run classes for students and the support the work of ILCs.
- \$465m towards upgrading and redeveloping existing public school infrastructure as well as creating new schools.
- \$17m to invest in science in schools.
- A freeze on all VET fees from the 2018 training year, at a cost \$11.8 million to be paid for by the foreign buyers surcharge. **This means that there will be no increases to TAFE fees in the State Government's first term.**
- \$6.9m to reinstate craft industry trade qualifications including upholstery, flooring and furniture finishing.
- \$8.9m to the TAFE Colleges as a funding substitute for VET course fee revenue.
- \$54m in improvements to infrastructure for a number of TAFEs across the state.

Just a bit of context:

In February 2016 the State Government implemented a number of significant reforms to the public training sector, including the consolidation to 5 TAFE Colleges managing the current 70 campus locations across WA on 11 April

2016. However the education sector was negatively impacted by significant cuts to teaching and education assistant jobs in the public education system in 2013. This has meant that the student to teacher ratio has gradually risen to be one of the [highest in the country at 15.7](#). The current increases in teacher personnel levels appear to be an attempt to remedy this situation and ensure that the student to teacher ratio reverts back to acceptable levels.

Potential Impact:

- The introduced measures will have a positive impact on WA's public education system. The influx of new jobs will mean that more resources will be able to be allocated to children and young people who are the most disadvantaged and therefore need help the most.
- Lessening the burden on the personnel in the State education system will mean that there will be more time for specialised attention for individual students.
- The reinstatement of some craft industry trade qualifications in the TAFE system will give young people more options to discover their optimal educational pathway.
- Freezing VET course fees is another positive measure that will assist TAFE based education to be affordable for all young people.

YACWA's Response:

YACWA welcomes the spending increases outlined in the budget that will improve the state's public education in system. In particular we commend the commitment to proving more teachers, educational assistants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education officers into schools in order to lessen the burden on the hardworking individuals involved in bettering the education of children and young people. **YACWA hopes that these extra resources will be distributed to effectively assist the most disadvantaged schools and students. YACWA also calls on the government to ensure that enough resources are being distributed to provide incentives for teachers to remain in the regions as many regional areas have low rates of teacher retention.**

YACWA commends the Government's commitment to freezing all VET fees from the 2018 year, as well as re-establishing more alternative pathways in trade qualifications for young people. We also welcome the commitment to **providing Teachers with the resources to implement evidence based mental health programs in schools.**

Further Information:

[Budget fact sheet on the State's education system](#)
[Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Sue Ellery BA MLC – Media Statement on TAFE initiatives](#)

[Education one of WA's budget winners – WAToday](#)

Health and Mental Health

Overview:

The State Government has announced increased funding in some areas of the Health and Mental Health care systems, however cuts and a lack of clarification and proper direction in others has seen the budget show a lack of progress in developing a sustainable effective health and mental health system.

Some of the positive budget initiatives include:

Health:

- \$2.8m expansion of the [Ear Bus](#) program into the Kimberley region.
- \$5m to develop the Peel Youth Medical Service Health Hub.
- \$2m to start establishing Urgent Care Clinics in emergency departments across the State.
- \$1.6m to expand the Find Cancer Early Program into more regional areas.
- \$0.8m to introduce a patient opinion system in all public hospitals.
- \$1.9m to fund meet and greet services for people from remote communities travelling for treatment.
- \$2.1m to implement the Let's Prevent program.

Mental Health:

- A tier 3 mental health program for at risk youth is to be established in the Peel region.
- \$7.3m to establish a 10-bed Step Up/Step Down community based mental health facility in Kalgoorlie; \$11.2m for a facility in Bunbury; and \$12.3m for a facility in Karratha.
- An increase in the supply of acute and sub-acute mental health beds.

Some of the more negative aspects of the budget's health announcement include:

- \$5.8m in cuts to services purchased from NGO's that are deemed expendable.
- No clarity as to what NDIS model will be adopted.
- Unclear funding for specific suicide prevention services.
- Mental health funding in the budget largely revolves around acute treatment and neglects early-intervention and community based programs.

Just a bit of context:

[The Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025: Better Choices Better Lives Plan](#) outlines a new strategy that emphasised a phased shift towards “the provision of more services in the community and enhanced programs and strategies that prevent mental illness, reduce drug and alcohol-related harm, and that intervene early to reduce the development of serious illness.” This was welcomed by many in the sector as a significantly important step towards greater positive, long-term and sustainable outcomes for communities and individuals, **however the 2017/18 Budget shows that the plan is still yet to fully translate into definitive change.**

Potential impact:

- As the Western Australian Association of Mental Health CEO Rod Astbury has noted the 10 year mental health and AODs plan was supposed to lay out a “roadmap for reform, showing how to rebalance WA’s broken mental health system away from expensive crisis-driven services to prevention and keeping people connected and closer to home.”
- This budget however has shown very little appetite to stick to this roadmap and therefore is likely to show little success in improving early intervention rates for young people with symptoms of mental illnesses.
- The \$5.8m cuts to NGO service providers in mental health means that small but critical organisations supporting vulnerable communities and young people with lived experience of mental health issues may be at risk of losing funding and therefore those communities and young people could potentially suffer.
- Youth suicide rates in Western Australia are currently at a crisis level, with [42% of all sudden deaths of 13 to 17 year olds between 2009 and 2017 being a result of suicide](#). The lack of clarity around funding for specific suicide prevention services for young people means that rates of youth suicide will potentially continue to rise.

YACWA’s Response:

YACWA welcomes the State Government’s investment in initiatives such as the Step-Up Step Down community-based mental health program and the tier 3 mental health program for at-risk young people in the aforementioned regional areas. These programs will provide much-needed mental health support for young people in regions. **We call on the government however to use this not for the sole purpose of supplementing any potential drug testing of welfare recipients in the area but instead ensure that these programs are just the beginning of long term investment into community based early intervention programs in the regions.**

YACWA holds concern for the announcement of the cuts to service providers, and the lack of information available regarding what programs and grants will be de-funded or reduced. We know that for young people, many early prevention, promotion and anti-stigma programs can have a huge positive impact on recovery of young people experiencing a mental health issue and there would be a significant negative impact if these were de-funded. **While we welcome the increased funding for acute service delivery, we maintain that the early prevention funding must be the priority to decrease the demand on acute and crisis services.**

YACWA notes that the initiatives proposed in this budget are largely not aligned with the Mental Health and AODS 2015-2025 plan. We call on the government to **use the upcoming Sustainable Health Review to revise its core funding to re-align back to the principles set out in the plan by focusing on prevention and community based programs with specialised services for young people which are then supplemented by acute treatment and crisis-driven services.**

The best way for the State Government to save money is to not cut \$5.8m from critical services assisting vulnerable young people but instead to use prevention strategies to address mental health issues in the community before medical treatment in a hospital becomes necessary.

YACWA also calls on the government to **clarify its position on which NDIS model to use and to urgently act on delivering more suicide prevention services.** We urge the government to take leadership on the issue of youth suicide and adopt the recommendations set out in the [WA Ombudsman's report into youth suicide](#).

Further Information:

[Budget fact sheet on health and mental health](#)

[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pp 141-144.](#)

[WAAMH CEO Rod Astbury – Media Release](#)

[Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, Mental Health, the Hon Roger Cook](#)

[BA GradDipBus MBA MLA – Media Statement on the Sustainable Health Review](#)

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AODs)

Overview:

Despite the Government announcing significant increases in investment in alcohol and other drug services, a significant proportion of funding has gone to reactionary and punitive focused measures, which is again, like the health and mental health funding, largely contradictory to the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025.

Some of the reactionary and punitive measures include:

- \$83.5m for additional police and specialist staff for the Meth Border Force.
- \$3.8m for the WA Police to target roadside drug and alcohol testing.

Some of the early-intervention, community-based and rehabilitative measures include:

- \$18.2m for an alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation centre in the South West and planning for a Kimberley centre.
- \$12m for alcohol and drug residential and community based treatment facilities.
- \$9.6m for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation prison for women at Wandoo.
- \$360,000 for a two-year trial of the Ice Breakers Program with the Albany Police and Community Youth Centre to support people moving from methamphetamine dependence into recovery.

Most of these initiatives form part of Labor's [Methamphetamine Action Plan \(MAP\)](#) – A key election commitment.

Just a bit of context:

Methamphetamine (Meth) use in WA has had significant increases in recent years, with the frequency with which people use meth daily increasing from 25.3% in 2015, compared to 12.4% in 2010. Furthermore, a 2013 national survey found 3.8% of the WA population over the age of 14 had admitted to using the drug. Recent testing of WA's wastewater has shown a [decline](#) in Meth use, however meth use is still high, and remains a significant problem for the WA community, incurring significant costs for law enforcement, health, child and family services, as well as affecting the health and wellbeing of young people. As such, the budget's AODs investment is heavily focused on tackling this issue.

Potential impact:

- The establishment of an AODs rehabilitation facility in the South-West, a Women's rehabilitative prison in Wandoo, planning for another in the Kimberley and other residential and community based treatment

facilities has the potential to achieve positive outcomes for the community.

- Funding a two-year trial and potential further expansion on the Ice Breakers Program with the APCYC is a positive measure that will improve attempts to assist young people to break addiction through harnessing the power of lived experience.
- The significant proportion of funds devoted to the Meth Border Force takes away from funding that could be directed into critical services in early-prevention; thus promoting a continued failure to break the cycle of addiction at its inception.

YACWA's Response:

The Government has asserted that their Meth Action Plan is focused on 'three equal pillars of prevention, protection and prosecution'. YACWA is sceptical however that this budget truly demonstrates that these are on equal footing. **We believe that the funding shows that prosecution is given more importance than the other two pillars, which YACWA believe are more important factors in tackling AOD addiction.**

YACWA welcomes the Government's commitment to establish new treatment and rehabilitation facilities across the state. **However we are concerned that there are no specific facilities allocated solely for the specialised treatment of young people suffering from substance addiction.** Young people may not respond positively to facilities using blanket approaches to treat both adults and young people and more clarification is needed to determine whether these announced facilities will have specialised services catered to young people.

YACWA shares WACOSS's concern that there is a missed opportunity for investment in early intervention and rehabilitation services as a result of the heavy budgetary contribution to increasing the size of the Meth Border Force. This only serves to further the 'war on drugs' mentality that has existed for decades and been proven ineffective. We are concerned that more young people who are suffering from substance abuse may get caught up in the justice system as a result and potentially worsen the cycle of addiction. YACWA strongly urges the government to **re-evaluate its funding priorities to produces positive, long-term and sustainable outcomes.**

Further Information:

[Budget Paper Fact Sheet – 'Building Safer Communities'](#)
[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pg. 143](#)

Family and Domestic Violence

Overview:

Through this budget announcement, we are pleased to see that the State Government has made a concerted effort to introduce systemic changes tackling the issue of family and domestic violence.

The new measures include;

- \$8.3m to establish two additional women's refuges, to commence development in 2018.
- Re-establishing Financial Counselling Services with a \$7.4m funding expansion.
- Funding for a new family and domestic violence counselling service in the Peel region.
- \$200,000 in planned funding to commence work to establish additional behavioural change service to support perpetrators of family and domestic violence.
- \$1.69m to expand existing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and CaLD victims of family and domestic violence.
- State Government funding for the RSPCA to support a Pets in Crisis program, which will help the victims of family and domestic violence look after their pets.

Just a bit of context:

The previous State Government approved a \$1.7 million contribution over the period 2015-16 to 2016-17 as part of the nationally aligned Council of Australian Governments' Campaign for Reducing Violence against Women and their Children. It is yet to be seen whether Labor's funding is properly aligned with the revised national plan.

Potential impact:

- The development of two additional women's refuges has the potential to assist and shelter additional young women who have suffered from domestic and family violence.
- Funding of the Pets in Crisis program is a welcome sign of a more holistic outlook from the State Government and my assist families as an alternative therapeutic measure.
- Funding for behavioural change services for perpetrators of family and domestic violence has the potential for effective rehabilitation and to break the cycle of violence, some clarification is needed as to the nature of the program however.
- Expansion of existing culturally appropriate services will further diversify and specialise domestic violence services and therefore enhance their effectiveness.

YACWA's Response:

YACWA welcomes the government's attempt to deliver a more holistic and specialised range of services to tackle the issue of family and domestic violence. We call on the Government to clarify as to whether these are part of the nationally aligned strategy in order to foster a more collaborative, unified approach. We also urge the government to clarify whether these newly funded domestic violence services will have any **specific counselling/rehabilitative services for young people**.

YACWA commends the reintroduction of financial counselling services for families as a key measure to support children and families affected by domestic violence.

Further Information:

[Budget Paper Fact Sheet – 'Building Safer Communities'](#)

[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pp. 236-238](#)

[Minister for Child Protection, Women's Interests, Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, Community Services, the Hon Simone McGurk BA\(Arts\), BA\(Comms\) MLA – Media Statement on Financial Counselling Reinstatement](#)

Housing and Homelessness

Overview:

The measures regarding housing and homelessness in the State Budget include:

- \$85.7m in funding for Homelessness and Other Support Services in 2017/18, a \$7m increase from 2016/17.
- Funding for these services drop sharply however in the forward estimates, with the estimate sitting at \$53.4m in 2020-21.
- Continued negotiations with the Federal Government over replacing both the National Affordable Housing Act and NPA on Homelessness with a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.
- \$344m Asset Investment Program for the Department of Communities.
- Continued cooperation with the Federal Government to maximise outcomes for social affordable housing through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, which will look to increase private sector investment into social and affordable rental housing.
- No Commonwealth funding commitment beyond 2017/18 for housing in remote communities after the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing ends in 2018.
- No timeline for the proposed amendments to reform the domestic violence provisions in the Residential Tenancies Act (1987)

Just a bit of context:

Many young people in Western Australia are often forced to live out of home with limited or no financial assistance from family. During this time they have to source safe, secure and affordable social housing, and options for this are generally limited. The ACOSS [2016 Poverty in Australia Report](#) suggests that there are 3 million people in total, including 731,000 Children and young people nationwide living in poverty. 59.7% of these people are in rental housing. The 2011 Census showed that 42% of homeless people in Australia and 39.3% in Western Australia were under the age of 25. This is an alarming number and clearly needs to be addressed through State investment in social housing and homeless services and early-intervention.

Potential impact:

- Potential decrease in support for Homeless young people after 2017/18.
- Potential for increased affordable rental housing due to investment from the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation.

- Potential use of METRONET transport to create nodes for affordable and social housing.
- Uncertainty around Federal Government funding for the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing has the potential to negatively impact on remote social housing.

YACWA's Response:

YACWA welcomes some of the initiatives in collaboration with the Federal Government to attempt to increase investment in social housing, however we are concerned that not enough investment and concrete strategy are being implemented into community housing, a key measure to increase affordable housing. **We urge the Government to use the Department of Communities Asset Investment Program and the ongoing coordination with Federal Government initiatives to ensure critical increases in safe, secure and affordable social and rental housing supply.**

We are deeply concerned however that the decrease in funding for Homelessness and Other Support Services after 2017/18 has the potential to put homeless young people at further risk. We ask the government to commit to **funding early-intervention and social/community housing programs to ensure at-risk young people do not fall into the cycle of homelessness and those that do are assisted with safe and secure social and community housing.**

Further Information:

[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pp. 236-244](#)
[Shelter WA State Budget Analysis September 2017](#)

Child Protection

Overview:

Funding for Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services decreases slightly in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17, while budget estimates remain at a steady level for these services over the forward estimates. On the other hand, funding for care arrangements and support for children in care steadily increases over the forward estimates, which is understandable with the current trends in WA's child protection system of more children coming into care and staying in care longer than ever before.

There has also been a 'realignment' of services in Child Protection through the restructure of the Responsible Parenting Services and establishment of the Intensive Family Support Service, resulting in a 25% decrease in EIFSS staffing levels ([See pg. 245 of Budget Paper No 2, Vol 1](#)).

Just a bit of context:

Aboriginal children and young people are vastly overrepresented in out-of-home care. As of June 2016, Aboriginal children and young people made up 53% of all children in the care of the state. Currently the Western Australian out-of-home care system is facing significant challenges with the total number of children in the care system rising and many are entering younger and staying longer.

In September of 2016, the Government launched the *Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy* to address these issues. This is a positive step however more effective, specialised and intense early intervention services are needed in order to support and benefit young people and families, to address problems before they become entrenched and to reduce cases of child removal and state care.

Potential impact:

- There are positive improvements in to care arrangements and services for children and young people, however the budget allocations indicate a lesser priority on earlier intervention and family support services, which we know are necessary to decrease the rates of children and young people entering out-of-home-care.

YACWA's Response:

YACWA welcomes the increased funding for care arrangements and support services for children and young people in care, however we maintain that

early-intervention services should be a core priority for the department, in order to reduce the burden and expenditure on out-of-home care services and arrangements. We ask the government to clarify the details regarding the 'realignment' in services and decreases of staffing levels for the EIFSS. There is also a lack of detail in the budget about ongoing Leaving Care and Transition to Adulthood Services and reforms. We will **continue to monitor this space to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for young people exiting care.**

YACWA continues our support for the Home Stretch Campaign and asks the Government to provide increased-funding support for leaving care services, and **to extend the leaving care age option from 18 to 21.**

Further Information:

[Budget Paper Fact Sheet – 'Building Safer Communities'](#)
[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pp 235-247](#)

Youth Justice

Overview:

Key measures in the budget relevant to youth justice include:

- \$850,000 to develop a 'Justice Pipeline Model' to forecast activity across the justice system and to estimate the impact of future policy and parameter changes.
- \$600,000 to establish the 'Target 120' program which was an election commitment to target the most prolific 120 juvenile offenders and their families to help turn lives around and reduce the rate of re-offending in the community. This will be aligned with the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy.
- Largely punitive measures have been announced to further improve 'safety and security' at Banksia Hill Detention Centre, through a range of initiatives including: emergency response training; strengthening security around management units; and tighter controls around decision-making and recording processes in relation to detainee management plans.
- Specific projects are in development to address:
 - Instances where Aboriginal persons are in custody due to driver's licence offences or unpaid fines.
 - The provision of victim support services for Aboriginal people in remote areas;
 - The introduction of a custody notification service.

Just a bit of context:

The '[Youth Justice Framework 2015-2018](#)' was delivered in 2015 by the Department of Corrective Services in consultation with the not-for-profit sector. This framework was designed to address the re-offending cycle of young people in the justice system by aligning government services with not for profit services. It is yet to be seen whether the new Government will develop a replacement framework for 2018 onwards.

Potential impact:

- The Target 120 Program has the potential to be successful in assisting the rehabilitation of targeted young people however more clarification is needed as to the specifics of the program and whether it can be applicable for young people across all areas of the justice system.
- The number of the announced measures for Banksia Hill are largely punitive and reactionary and therefore this will not have any positive impact in rehabilitation and decreasing re-offending, nor does it provide for increased specialised services for young people in detention.
- Potentially continuing over representation of young Aboriginal people in the justice system.

YACWA's Response:

YACWA believes that this budget misses an opportunity to shift governmental focus onto early-intervention initiatives to prevent children from entering the juvenile justice system. **We believe this continued neglect of early-intervention services is misguided, as this is the best way to break the cycle of re-offending.**

YACWA is concerned that the Justice Pipeline Model will solely focus on processes and policy within the justice system and will neglect early-intervention and rehabilitation models and pathways. **We ask the government to clarify the details of the Model further and also ensure that they include these crucial factors as core components of the Model.** Whilst we welcome attempts to provide more rehabilitation services, **we call on the government to clarify details regarding the Target 120 System and it's applicability to the wider juvenile justice system.**

Despite the planned development of programs to combat the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people and young people in the justice system, **we support WACOSS's statement that it is not possible to significantly address this issue without repealing mandatory sentencing legislation.**

We condemn the Government's focus on punitive measures at Banksia Hill, and strongly urge a shift in focus to more therapeutic, trauma-informed and restorative approaches to rehabilitation at Banksia Hill Detention centre in order to reduce rates of re-detention.

We also encourage the Government to develop further specialised facilities to deal with crisis care, intensive management, rehabilitation and the diverse complexity of Australian young people.

Further Information:

[Budget Paper Fact Sheet – 'Building Safer Communities'](#)
[Budget Paper No 2, Vol. 1, pp 235-247](#)
[Attorney General, the Hon John Quigley LLB JP MLA, Treasurer,](#)
[Minister for Finance, Energy & Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Ben Wyatt](#)
[LLB MSc MLA – Media Statement on the Justice Pipeline Model.](#)

Other Measures

Redistribution of Royalties for Regions (RfR):

Royalties for Regions is undergoing a major restructure as a number of previously separately funded regional programs will now come from the RfR money in order to cover the cost of some of Labor's election promises.

YACWA is pleased to see some of the RfR funds being redistributed into positive initiatives for the regions in areas such as mental health and education but **call on the government to ensure this does not take away from other critical services funded by RfR.**

State-wide Roll-Out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):

Despite the continued uncertainty around which delivery model will be used; the transition to full scheme has commenced from July 1 into the Pilbara, Kimberley and South Metropolitan areas (i.e. Rockingham and Mandurah).

YACWA calls on the Government to **clarify their position on the NDIS as soon as possible in order to avoid confusion in implementation.**

Removal of Historical Convictions:

The government has announced it will provide for the expungement of historical convictions related to consensual same sex activity.

YACWA welcomes this as a **long-overdue measure.**

The Development of an Aboriginal Ranger Program:

The Government has announced a \$20m investment into the establishment of an Aboriginal Ranger Program to capitalise on the economic and social benefits that employment provides in remote and regional Western Australian communities and to protect the environment.

YACWA welcomes this initiative as a positive method to provide jobs for Aboriginal people in the regions. We call on the **Government to ensure some of these Ranger positions are designated for Aboriginal young people.**