



2020/21 WA State Budget Analysis Report

November 2020

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

Message from the CEO

On Thursday the 8th of October, the State Government released its 2020/21 Budget outlining confirmed spending over the last 12 months, and its plan for investment and savings over the next few financial years, including the key initiatives that may have a significant effect on the future health and wellbeing of young people in Western Australia.

This year's State Budget is largely focused on facilitating the response to COVID-19 and mitigating the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. This is understandable given it is a worldwide crisis that is unprecedented in scale, and so it has fundamentally changed not only the nature of State Government spending but also the core priorities and concerns of the Western Australian community. No one could have foreseen that the State Government would this year have had to implement restricted movement not only to other states but also within Western Australia. These and other extraordinary responses to the pandemic have placed unique impacts on young people, and so this year's State Budget has shaped up to be one of the most important in living memory.

The State Government's COVID-19 Recovery Plan (the Recovery Plan), launched in July 2020, set out a vision for Western Australia's social and economic recovery and contained the bulk of the State Budget's investment allocation for COVID-19 specific initiatives, including those targeting the impacts on young people. Given the overwhelming detrimental impact COVID-19 has had on young people's mental health and economic future, we expected to see the State Government build on this initial work done in the Recovery Plan by using the 2020/21 Budget as a platform to detail not only short term recovery initiatives but also set out a long-term vision for a 'new normal' in Western Australia. This would mean facilitating widespread changes to the State Government's core funding priorities to tackle longstanding issues such as poverty, inequality and discrimination that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

Below is our verdict on whether the State Government through the 2020-21 Budget has capitalised on the opportunity COVID-19 has presented to create a better future for young people in Western Australia. We have also reiterated our recommendations from our *Framework for Young People's Recovery from COVID-19 in Western Australia* as well as our *2020-21 State Budget Positioning Paper*, as they align to each area of focus. In the lead up to the 2021 State Election next March we will continue to advocate for these to be a priority focus of conversation, so that we can ensure that ongoing COVID-19 recovery efforts are optimised to rebuild our state to create a more equitable and prosperous future for all young people.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Wortham
Chief Executive Officer
Youth Affairs Council of WA

Contents:

<i>Cost of Living</i>	4
<i>Education</i>	6
<i>Jobs and Training</i>	8
<i>Mental Health</i>	11
<i>Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)</i>	13
<i>Family and Domestic Violence</i>	15
<i>Housing and Homelessness</i>	17
<i>Child Protection</i>	20
<i>Youth Justice</i>	22
<i>What Else is in the Budget?</i>	25

Cost of Living

Budget Highlights

- Household fees and charges have decreased for the first time in 15 years.
- A \$600 one-off credit payment will reduce electricity bills for every household.
- Increases to utility, motor vehicle and public transport related charges and tariffs have been frozen.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

After years of annual increases to the household cost of living, including rising utility charges, the State Government has committed to reducing the essential costs the average household must pay.

This budget guarantees an average saving of \$663.52 in fees and charges for each household in Western Australia — a reduction of 10.4%.

The State Government's investment in reducing the cost of living has included:

- A \$600 one-off WA Household Electricity Credit (\$644 million investment).
- A freeze on Electricity and Water tariffs, motor vehicle related charges, public transport fares, and reductions to the Emergency Services Levy, wastewater and drainage charges (\$439 million investment).

This is on top of previously announced measures designated to assist households with COVID-19 response and recovery:

- An extension of the evictions moratorium for renters until March 28, 2021.
- A one-off doubling of the Energy Assistance Payment — rising from \$305 to \$610 in 2020 (\$102 million investment).
- A policy that no households in WA experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 will have their power or water disconnected.

Potential Impacts on Young People

The substantial concessions provided to households in the State Budget are welcome initiatives that will provide immediate relief to young people on low incomes. For young people who are more likely to still be coping with the financial impacts of COVID-19, this is particularly positive news. It is likely that the savings from these initiatives will be used to purchase essential goods and services and support individuals to keep food on the table and a roof over their head.

However, young people will continue to see the impacts of an increased cost of living from previous years. The long-term impacts of unemployment following from COVID-19 place many young people at greater risk of poverty and unemployment. The State Government must ensure support to reduce the cost of living continues in the years to come. Adequate support payments, such as the Residential Rent Relief Grant Scheme and Energy Assistance Payment to vulnerable young people on low incomes, are ripe for extension or to be made permanent, and should be adapted in line with

other changes to income such as future reductions to JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments.

Recommendations for Future Investment:

1. **Expand and/or entrench debt relief & amnesty programs** such as the Residential Rent Relief Grant Scheme and Energy Assistance Payment to account for future changes to income such as reductions to JobSeeker and JobKeeper and ensure young people are adequately supported to avoid poverty and hardship.
2. **Ensure sufficient future resourcing to tackle food insecurity in Western Australia**, ensuring the affordability and accessibility of food by adopting the recommendations put forward by the WA Food Relief Network.

Education

Budget Highlights

- **Strong spending on education infrastructure to build and upgrade new and existing schools.**
- **New and existing education engagement programs mentioned; however funding details are largely absent from the budget.**
- **Very little comparative funding for initiatives aiming to address educational disadvantage for vulnerable young people.**

Overview – Key Investment Areas

The State Government's investment in education included:

- \$456.2 million investment in upgrades, development and construction for school facilities across WA.
- \$39.6 million for enhanced cleaning schedules for all schools.
- \$11.6 million for an Aboriginal Girls Engagement Program (the Recovery Plan).
- \$7.9 million investment from 2019/20 in the School Curriculum and Standards Authority for an International Education Program (the Recovery Plan).
- \$1.5 million for the International Education Advisory Group in 2020/21.
- \$750k in 2019/20 for computer devices for vulnerable students (the Recovery Plan – no extra funding in 2020/21).
- \$120 thousand for a Student Re-Engagement Program, down from \$1.16 million in 2019/20.
- \$120k for a Student Re-Engagement Program, down from \$1.16 million in 2019/20.
- Collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development to review and improve the quality of training in schools.

Several other key initiatives (both new and existing) were included in the budget but lack detail on funding and program specifics. These include:

- Using the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students.
- Continuing KindiLink for three years and implementing it across all schools involved in the Kimberley Schools Project.
- Introducing the Aboriginal Leader Aspirant Program to support young Aboriginal leaders with their career and leadership goals.
- Implementing the 10-point action plan on addressing violence in schools, facilitating better alignment and integration of services for at-risk students, and piloting a program for alternative learning settings for the most violent students.
- Further expanding training to staff through the Gate Keeper Suicide Prevention and Youth Mental Health First Aid programs.
- Progressing implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse within the whole-of-government 10-year implementation plan.
- Collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development to review and improve the quality of training in schools.
- Deploying upgrades to school's digital networks and securing contracts for bandwidth increases.

Potential Impacts on Young People

The Department of Education's investment in the 2020/21 State Budget is largely focused on building new and upgrading existing schools. Whilst we are happy to see this, we are concerned about the lack of detail on ongoing initiatives focused on providing support for our most vulnerable students, most of which are delivered only within short-term COVID-19 recovery funding. These initiatives cover a wide range of crucial areas of need; from supporting Aboriginal young people's wellbeing and empowering young leaders, to providing improved Youth Mental Health First Aid Training to teachers. However, with very little additional information provided in the budget it is hard to make a full judgement on their potential impact. With a more transparent, community-led process and a commitment to long-term funding, we believe they can be effective in improving outcomes for vulnerable students.

Whilst positive signs are there, this budget shows that the State Government has not yet demonstrated its full capacity to eliminate the education gap and digital divide in WA. These efforts cannot be limited to a short-term recovery period. The pandemic has created a significant opportunity for the State Government to declare a strong vision for re-designing our education system to be accessible and supportive to all and this must demonstrate a fundamental shift in the way we approach access and inclusivity in the education system. To coordinate this systemic shift, an inclusive Education Strategy that specifically targets bridging the gap in educational support and outcomes for vulnerable students and those living in areas with the highest educational disadvantage is required.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. **Develop an Inclusive Education Strategy**, with focus on investment to bridge the gap in educational support and outcomes for vulnerable students and those living in areas with the highest educational disadvantage, particularly for young people with disability, young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and young people living in poverty, including a framework for integration of youth service support in schools.
2. **Ensure access to tutoring and educational resources for young people living in poverty** to respond to the gap in education outcomes created by COVID-19.
3. **Commit to a statewide digital infrastructure upgrade to ensure schools, communities and young people** have access to technology for digital/remote learning, as part of the *Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint*.

Jobs and Training

Budget Highlights

- Strong investment in affordable TAFE courses and opportunities for displaced trainees.
- A strategic focus on jobs growth for young people in sustainable and environmentally friendly industries.
- Long overdue resourcing to combat the issue of wage theft, an issue which has disproportionately affected young people.
- Despite TAFE investment, job creation and infrastructure investment overwhelmingly continues to favour male-dominated industries.
- No overarching long-term strategy for Youth Employment.
- Very few specific employment programs for disadvantaged young people.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

The onset of COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing crisis in youth unemployment across Australia. Overwhelming job losses in industries with high youth employment, such as retail and hospitality, have had devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing and financial security of many young people.

As a result it was no surprise to see the State Government note youth unemployment as a priority issue, investing in several welcome initiatives in the Recovery Plan to provide employment and training opportunities for young people struggling with the economic effects of the pandemic. These included:

- \$4.8 million for employers to engage displaced apprentices.
- \$8.8 million for the Tourism Recovery Program.
- \$60.3 million for a Green Jobs Plan, aiming to create around 1000 conservation jobs and educational pathways for young people.
- \$240 thousand for the PIVOT Program for Small Business, which aims to support small businesses to reassess their current business model and to look at ways to innovate and build resilience for long term success.
- \$890 thousand for the Hospitality and Tourism COVID-19 Hygiene Training.
- \$167.4 million for upgrades to existing TAFE Colleges.
- \$32 million to reduce fees for a further 39 courses.
- \$25 million for 15 free short TAFE courses in areas of emerging need.
- \$1.9 million for 250 free places in a short civil construction course.

Building on these efforts, other key elements announced in this budget were:

Investments in Jobs -

- \$4.5 million to the Western Australian Space Industry.
- \$17.2 million to Defence Industry Workforce Initiatives, aiming to encourage defence employers to employ apprentices in key trades and a range of initiatives to boost the uptake of women, veterans and young people in the defence industry and to support future vessel builds.
- \$4 million for strategies to combat wage theft, these include:
 - Three additional Industrial Inspectors targeting wage theft.

- The development of education resources and promotional activities as part of the Employment Rights in WA Initiative.
- The Getting Employment Right Grants Program under which grants will be provided to employers and employees.
- Organisations to deliver education initiatives on employment rights and obligations to small businesses and their employees; and
- Three-year grant funding for the Employment Law Centre.

Investments in training -

- \$41 million for the NDIS Job Matching Service, supporting educational pathways for careers in disability services.
- \$1.3 million to freeze 2021 TAFE fees for international students.

Additionally, the Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Department of Education are partnering to Implement the 46 recommendations from the recent *Review of Skills, Training and Workforce Development*, focusing on “creating new futures for recently displaced workers, ensuring training integrates new industry technologies, aligning training to labour market opportunities, and ensuring training is accessible to all”.

Potential Impacts on Young People

Given the economic impact of COVID-19 overwhelmingly affects young people in WA, it was welcome to see the State Government have a strong focus on youth employment in the Recovery Plan through funding to eliminate or reduce TAFE fees for some courses, engage out of work apprentices and implement a Green Jobs Plan.

We also applaud the State Budget’s announcements of funding to combat wage theft, upgrade TAFE facilities, freeze TAFE fees for international students and develop better pathways for careers in disability services. These initiatives are positive first steps to address youth unemployment and grow sustainable industries for the future. However, YACWA believes this strategy is reliant on individual short-term investment projects, and does not represent the broader unified shifts in the delivery and planning of government services that are required to fix the broad systemic gaps that exist in Western’s Australia’s approach to tackling youth unemployment.

Unfortunately the State Budget does not build on the early good work done in the Recovery Plan by failing to demonstrate a clear vision and collective strategy to address youth unemployment, as well as little additional investment in specific employment supports for diverse young people who may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, such as those from refugee and migrant backgrounds, as well as better job creation in industries that largely employ women such as the care system.

We urge the State Government to build on their current efforts through a long-term Youth Jobs Strategy that creates a diverse range of job and training opportunities for young people in WA. Young people require leadership from the State Government to create accessible, sustainable jobs, and a strategy to grow a workforce they can thrive in.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. **Develop a ten-year Western Australian Youth Jobs Strategy** with the end-goal of full youth employment in Western Australia. This should be complemented by robust investment to grow industries and employment opportunities in the medium and long-term as well as financial incentives and support frameworks for local businesses and young workers to facilitate meaningful employment.
2. Build on the Green Jobs Plan by **expanding investment in growth industries and the renewable energy sector as well as educational pathways in these for young people.**
3. **Invest in community-led youth employment programs** targeted towards supporting migrant and refugee young people and other diverse communities to reduce the barriers and enter long-term employment.
4. **Improve the sustainability and capacity of the community sector by resourcing a strategy dedicated to increasing job opportunities in the care economy** and meet identified growth needs in areas such as community mental health, aged care, disability care, early childhood education, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Mental Health

Budget Highlights

- **Dedicated funding for coordinated action on suicide prevention, including specific regional action plans.**
- **Positive initiatives to support Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing.**
- **No mention of funding for the Young People Priority Framework (likely to be in next year's budget).**
- **Comparatively little investment in specific youth mental health initiatives.**
- **Early intervention, prevention and community support funding remains stagnant, despite ballooning costs in acute & crisis care.**

Overview – Key Investment Areas

Despite the outbreak of COVID-19 seemingly under control in Western Australia, young people continue to face an unstable economic and social climate which poses continual threats to their mental health and wellbeing. While COVID-19 restrictions are easing in Western Australia, the risk of dying by suicide and poor mental health remains high — unemployment, uncertainty for the future, trauma, social disconnection, and pervasive hopelessness are risk factors which are a common occurrence for vulnerable young people in Western Australia.

With this in mind, the State Budget's investment in mental health includes:

- \$25.1 million for a 16-bed youth mental health, alcohol and other drug homelessness service in the Perth Metro for young people aged 16-24 (*the Recovery Plan*).
- \$24.1 million for a new 20-bed adult (inclusive of 18-25 year olds) community care unit, which will provide high-level support and rehabilitation services in a home-like environment in the community to individuals with mental health issues (*the Recovery Plan*).
- \$520k funding to continue the Safe Haven Café pilot in the metropolitan and Kimberley areas. This is a peer-based non-clinical service for people with mental health issues who may otherwise attend emergency departments after hours.
- \$3.7 million to continue funding for the Mobile Clinical Outreach Team, which delivers mental health triage, assertive outreach, clinical assessment and treatment for homeless populations in Perth and Fremantle (*the Recovery Plan*).
- \$10 million in additional funding for the Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing Package (*the Recovery Plan*).
- \$1.4 million for the Empowered Youth Network aiming to support and empower Aboriginal young people and increase their uptake of mental health as well as increase their uptake of social and emotional wellbeing services.
- \$46.9 million for suicide prevention programs and initiatives (*the Recovery Plan*), including:
 - \$37.1 million for the WA Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021 - 2025.
 - \$9.8 million for Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans in each region of WA.

- \$39.4 million to fund the Fair Work Australia Equal Remuneration Order for non-profit Mental Health Services.
- A \$32.5 million increase in funding for Community Bed-Based Services (largely due to the new youth AOD service and Community Care Unit).

Potential Impacts on Young People

Whilst we applaud the State Government for delivering additional funding for specific Suicide Prevention and Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing packages, spending has missed key areas required to adequately address the overwhelming impact of COVID-19 on youth mental health, especially when you compare this to record spends on general health, policing and roads.

Funding for mental health continues to skew towards crisis and emergency services, while prevention, early intervention and community support investment remains stagnant. The State Government's *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025 (the Plan)* recommended greater investment in prevention and early intervention services to support mental health and reduce the burden on more costly crisis services.

As a result it is disappointing to see that while costs allocated to in-hospital services increase significantly (\$68.9 million over the forward estimates), prevention and community support services continue to stagnate:

- Funding for Mental Health Community Support Services increases by only \$1.9 million to \$46.6 million in 2020/21, remaining only 5.5% of total mental health spending, which is well short of the 22% target outlined in the plan.
- Funding for Mental Health Prevention Services increases by \$1.2 million to \$8.7 million in 2020/2021, again remaining well short of the 6% target spend as outlined in the Plan.

Young people are struggling with continued economic uncertainty and the lingering effects of lockdown. We need a much stronger investment from the State Government in mental health and other vital areas to properly recover from the impacts of COVID-19. YACWA reaffirms our belief that early intervention and community support are the best mechanisms for improving long term youth mental health outcomes and reducing the burden on crisis services. We hope to see future funding addressing this included in the upcoming Young People Priority Framework.

Recommendations for Future Investment

- 1. Increase investment in non-clinical community mental health supports and prevention initiatives**, including those specifically targeted towards young people, in line with the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan.
- 2. Fund dedicated youth peer support and specialised mental health programs** for LGBTIQ+ young people, young people from refugee and/or migrant backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and young people living with a disability.
- 3. Allocate significant funding to dedicated prevention and community support services for young people under the Mental Health Young People Priority Framework.**

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD)

Budget Highlights

- Investment in AOD support accommodation for young people experiencing homelessness.
- Priority focus on initiatives reducing drug related harm but little funding detail available.
- Very little detail on specific investment in AOD support for young people.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

- \$25.1 million for a 16-bed youth mental health, alcohol and other drug homelessness service in the Perth Metro for young people aged 16-24 (*the Recovery Plan*).
- \$322.2 million to implement the Methamphetamine Action Plan with more crisis support, mental health and drug and alcohol services, prevention and harm reduction initiatives, the roll out of the Meth Border Force to disrupt the movement of meth, delivery of the alcohol and drug treatment prison and the toughest penalties in Australia for meth traffickers.
- A \$30.9 million increase in mental health and AOD community bed-based services.
- An 8.2% increase in spending for AOD prevention services to \$8.7 million in 2020/21, which is 8.8% of total AOD spending.
- An 9.2% increase in spending for AOD prevention services to \$7.5 million in 2020/21, which is 7.6% of total AOD spending.

Several other key initiatives and priorities (new and existing) have been announced in the budget however detail is not included around funding and program specifics:

- Ongoing development of the Mental Health Commission's Young People's Priority Framework to guide Government agencies and the mental health and AOD sector in supporting and responding to the needs of young people aged 12-24. No funding has yet been allocated to this project.
- The Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Workforce Strategic Framework 2020-2025 has been released, along with some immediate initiatives that are to be implemented this financial year.
- In 2020-21, the Mental Health Commission will work with key stakeholders in AOD prevention on actions addressing key priorities including reducing alcohol use in pregnancy, young people and alcohol use, safer music festivals, development of an illicit drug support resource with local government, and reducing alcohol-attributable chronic health disease. These priorities will be addressed through a combination of public education, working with communities experiencing high rates of alcohol-related harm, training and capacity building, and the development of resources and guidelines for reducing alcohol and other drug-related harm.

Potential Impacts on Young People

The State Budget contains several welcome announcements for initiatives addressing alcohol and other drug related harm; resourcing for a specialist accommodation

providing mental health, AOD support for young people experiencing homelessness and increases in funding to community bed-based services is welcome, however the State Budget contains very little other specific AOD investment for young people.

The Mental Health Commission outlines a priority focus in reducing AOD-related harm through providing education, service support and capacity building, however we are concerned to see a lack of funding detail attached to these, leading to question marks over how effectively they will be implemented and outcomes they will produce. Importantly, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) prevention activities, including a public education campaign and training is noted as work being undertaken however little other details are available. Whilst this is positive, without a coordinated strategy to address FASD the potential for these initiatives to effectively address broader issues surrounding this, such as the overrepresentation of those with a FASD diagnosis in the Youth Justice System, is uncertain.

We are also interested to see the breakdown of the \$322m funding that has been allocated for expansion of the Methamphetamine Action Plan; generally this investment has been focused more towards punitive enforcement and so we hope to see a renewed focus and prioritisation of community based prevention and harm reduction initiatives.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. **Increase investment in non-clinical community AOD supports and prevention initiatives**, including those specifically targeted towards young people, in line with the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan.
2. **Resource the development and implementation of a sector-led harm reduction blueprint for Western Australia**, including initiatives such as a Pill Testing trial which are specifically targeted towards reducing AOD related harm for young people.
3. **Develop an across-government strategy to guide the State Government's approach to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** and complement the existing National FASD Strategic Action Plan 2018-2028.

Family and Domestic Violence

Budget Highlights

- A comprehensive support package and long overdue reform.
- Positive initiatives to support Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing.
- Mobile Outreach and culturally appropriate supports have received modest funding.
- Early intervention initiatives are largely absent from the Budget to complement support for victims.
- Specific initiatives providing support and/or counselling for children and/or young people are also missing.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) spending in the State Budget includes:

- A \$28.1 million support package for victims of Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) which was previously announced as part of the Recovery Plan. These initiatives will respond to existing demand for FDV services and include:
 - \$6.7 million over two years to strengthen FDV Response Teams through a partnership between the Department, the Western Australian Police Force and the community services sector, with an additional 17 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in up to 17 locations across the State;
 - \$8.6 million over two years providing a pool of 23 Mobile Outreach Workers in refuges across the State to provide support to women and children experiencing or at further risk of FDV;
 - \$4 million for the expansion of the two women’s refuges in Peel and Kwinana, which will enable an additional six accommodation units to be built at each of the sites;
 - \$2.6 million to extend the Kimberley Family Violence Service trial by two years;
 - \$1.1 million over two years for counselling, advocacy and support services; and
 - \$0.1 million for a program to support women who are residing at FDV refuges to gain employment skills, access career training or retraining and attend a range of workshops and short courses to support their pathways to employment.
- \$1.6 million in grant funding for culturally appropriate services for FDV victims.
- \$7 million in funding to implement Family Violence Legislation Reform through:
 - Enabling the electronic tagging of serious family violence offenders and criminalising non-fatal suffocation and strangulation.
 - \$7 million for a new shuttle-conferencing model to streamline contested family violence restraining order applications, including \$2.6 and \$4.7 million to Legal Aid and the Department of Justice respectively to assist with

diverting contested family violence restraining orders from court into this model.

- A \$4.6 million expansion of electronic monitoring of offenders in the community. The two-year trial launched in August 2020 involves GPS tracking of up to 100 high-risk offenders who have breached a restraining order and committed a further act of family violence.

Potential Impacts on Young People

YACWA commends the State Government for their comprehensive investment package addressing FDV. FDV investment is timely post-lockdown, with many reports from service providers of an increase in experiences of FDV and a lack of safe spaces for individuals experiencing unsafe homes.

In particular, the new shuttle-conferencing model will be important in assisting to improve outcomes for women and children and support them through legal proceedings in the justice system. The resourcing provided for Mobile Outreach Workers and culturally appropriate FDV services are also welcome, however given the significant operational costs to conduct mobile outreach and the large existing gap for culturally appropriate FDV services we believe this investment should be scaled up to improve effective service delivery and facilitate better long-term positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

YACWA reiterates its concern over whether any of the newly announced services will contain any targeted support or counselling for children and young people who have experienced FDV. Young people and children are particularly at risk of experiencing or witnessing domestic violence and as a result there needs to be specific initiatives announced to address this.

Additionally, whilst these announcements are welcome, YACWA is disappointed that they are not accompanied by significant investment in early intervention and prevention to prevent, rather than simply respond to FDV. Resourcing for FDV prevention programs included in the State Budget all either stagnate or decrease over the forward estimates, these include the Respectful Relationships and Our Watch Programs. Programs targeting potential perpetrators, providing family support and holistic counselling and other similar initiatives must also be prioritised to identify and prevent unhealthy relationships, family violence and mental health issues.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. Ensure new initiatives announced in the State Budget and Recovery Plan include **targeted therapeutic supports to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, such as specialised counselling services.**
2. **Commit to ensuring future budget allocations around FDV increase prevention spending to align with the targets set out in the 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family & Domestic Violence** to ensure our system remains appropriately balanced. This includes significantly increasing ongoing funding for education based FDV prevention programs such as Respectful Relationships and Our Watch.

Housing and Homelessness

Budget Highlights

- Positive first steps to improve social and affordable housing availability.
- Increases to investment are largely limited to short term recovery efforts.
- Limited measures to address significant gaps in youth homelessness services.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

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

- A \$10.7m increase in funding for Homelessness Support Services to \$67.2m in 2020-21, which then decreases to \$47.9m in 2023-24. The increase in 2020-21 is largely due to the additional spending under the Housing and Homelessness Investment Package.
- Three different social housing construction initiatives. These initiatives will result in the development of 831 new social housing dwellings and 75% of these will be allocated to people on the priority waiting list, and will include:
 - \$184m for the METRONET Social and Affordable Housing and Jobs Package (previously announced), building up to 320 new social housing dwellings, 400 affordable homes and deliver a further 670 homes for full market price sale during the next five years.
 - \$183.2m for the Housing and Homelessness Investment Package (previously announced), including:
 - \$125m for 300 new public housing units.
 - \$35m for the construction of two Common Ground facilities, providing permanent, supported housing in a purpose-built complex, for adults over 18 who have experienced chronic homelessness or are low income earners.
 - \$19.2m to facilitate the refurbishment of existing social housing dwellings and deliver investment into 200 shared equity dwellings.
 - \$319m for the Social Housing Economic Recovery Package (COVID-19 Recovery Plan), which is comprised of three streams:
 - \$97m to build or buy (off-the-plan) about 250 dwellings, to be used for either social or affordable housing, across both metropolitan Perth and regional areas over 2020-21 to 2022-23
 - \$142m to deliver refurbishments to 1,500 existing public and supported residential houses and community housing organisation houses, including the costs to relocate tenants, over 2020-21 to 2021-22;
 - \$80m for targeted maintenance programs for 3,800 regional social housing properties, including remote Aboriginal communities' stock and subsidised housing for regional Government workers in 2020-21.

- \$6m over 4 years for renewable energy upgrades for 500 social housing properties.
- \$38m to develop Aboriginal Short-Stay Accommodation Centres in Geraldton and Kununurra.
- \$201.4m in funding to deliver essential services in remote Aboriginal communities, including repairs and maintenance for housing, tenancy support, and delivery of essential and municipal services, following the withdrawal of Commonwealth funding.
- \$34.5m for Housing First Homelessness Initiative which provides immediate housing and wraparound support programs in Perth, Rockingham, Mandurah, Bunbury and Geraldton (already announced).
- \$25.1m for a 16-bed youth mental health, alcohol and other drug homelessness service in the Perth Metro for young people aged 16-24 (*COVID-19 Recovery Plan*).
- \$970k for the Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

Potential Impacts on Young People

In line with the State Government's overall approach as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, the State Budget is overwhelmingly focused on infrastructure, with housing construction seen as a key component of economic and social recovery. Whilst it is positive to see a solid commitment to this through the *2020-2030 WA Housing Strategy*, the Budget's investment in social and affordable housing falls well short of current need, given there are around 14,000 individuals currently in social housing waitlist in Western Australia. With record low vacancy rates and high levels of youth unemployment, it is vital that the State Government drastically improves their investment targets to prevent a potential increase in rates of youth homelessness.

Whilst sorely needed, investment in housing infrastructure is insufficient without being combined with resourcing for support to enable young people to exit homelessness into stable housing. It is therefore concerning to see very little new initiatives to address gaps in the youth homelessness service system. Many vital services, such as youth outreach, often are delivered without dedicated funding, and others such as crisis accommodation currently face unsustainable demand. Young people need to be supported with specialist programs that target their unique need, and this Budget largely ignores this in favour of spending on general housing and homelessness initiatives.

The State Government's investment in Housing First Initiatives and a new youth mental health, alcohol and other drug homelessness service are positive first steps, however they are relatively small investments in comparison to demand. Another noticeable trend throughout this budget is that investment in the community sector and support services for vulnerable individuals is largely confined to a short-term, recovery focus. Although Homelessness Support Services get a welcome \$10.7m boost in funding to \$67.2m in 2020-21, this is largely the result of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan's Housing and Homelessness Investment Package, as funding then decreases over the forward estimates to \$47.9m in 2023-24, which is lower than 2019-20 investment.

COVID-19 has brought on unprecedented levels of unemployment, reduced income, increased housing stress and mental health difficulties among young people. This has provided both a moral imperative, to spare young people the trauma of homelessness, and an economic one, given the high cost of homelessness to the State. Coordinated action between the State Government's *10 Year Strategy on Homelessness* and the Community Sector's *Strategy to End Homelessness* has given Western Australia an unparalleled opportunity to end youth homelessness, as stakeholders across the community have been galvanised in a way that has never occurred before. We urge the State Government to take advantage of this with a commitment to match its strategic ambition with the required levels of investment.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. **Invest in a Housing First for Youth model** that is specifically designed for young people aged 16-25, aligns with broader Housing First Homelessness initiatives, and enables access to/integrates wrap around supports such as mental health, AOD and employment and education pathways.
2. **Resource the expansion of a Statewide Embedded Youth Outreach Model;** formalising a partnership between the State Government, youth services and community leaders across the state to effectively engage street present and at-risk young people.
3. Direct additional infrastructure **investment into further expanding social housing** construction in Western Australia, aligned to meet needs identified by Department of Communities modelling highlighting the need for more than 30,000 additional affordable dwellings.

Child Protection

Budget Highlights

- **Positive investment in an Aboriginal Family-led Decision-Making pilot program.**
- **A small boost to Early Intervention & Family Support Funding but a long-term funding is stagnant despite increasing costs in care.**
- **A lack of coordinated focus on addressing long standing gaps in service delivery in the Child Protection System.**

Overview – Key Investment Areas

The State Budget's measures in regards to the Child Protection System include:

- \$7.9 million of funding in 2020-21 to account in demand for Child Protection Services.
- A \$7.4 million increase in funding for Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services to \$96.2m in 2020/21 however this then decreases down to \$90.1m in 2023/24.
- A \$64.7 million increase in actual costs (\$466m) for Care Arrangements and Support Services for children in care in 2019/20 compared to the original budget allocation (\$401.2m) for 2019-20.
- A \$12 Increase in forecasted costs to plan for and support a child in the CEO's care which is largely due to additional child support teams who work closely with children in care, their families and carers, along with increased special support payments for children in care.
- A \$40.7 million reduction in funding for Out-of-Home Care, Foster Carer and Family Support Grants in 2020-21 to \$107.8 million, an increase to \$118.1 million in 2021-22 and then a further freeze on increases until 2023-24.
- \$444 thousand to continue the Home Stretch Pilot Program in 2020-21 but no ongoing funding in the following years .
- \$715 thousand for an Aboriginal Family-led Decision-Making Pilot (already announced) to support improved collaboration with families at risk of child protection intervention. The two-year pilot will be led and co-designed by Aboriginal people in Western Australia, focusing on three cohorts in several metropolitan and/or regional areas.

Potential Impacts on Young People

YACWA is disappointed at the focus of investment in the Child Protection system in the State Budget. There is inadequate long-term resourcing for Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services, which demonstrates a lack of sustained focus to address the continuing rise of the total number of children in care.

Whilst the \$7.4 million funding boost in 2020-21 is welcome, given that total costs ballooned out by \$64.7 million compared to what was budgeted, it is clear that this short-term increase will be insufficient to have any effect on reversing this trend.

Funding for the Aboriginal Family-led Decision-Making Pilot is welcome as a long-overdue measure however its success is hampered by the lack of long-term vision and coordinated funding for early intervention, meaning that its intention to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in care is weakened.

Leaving care services also get little mention in the Budget, and whilst the Home Stretch trial is given funding to continue in 2020-21, there is no further ongoing investment in the forward estimates for initiatives to support young people in care past the age of 18. It is therefore unclear how the outcomes of the trial will translate into better extended care support and leaving care services for young people exiting the Child Protection System and so we urge the State Government to provide more transparency over its future.

This Budget has given little indication that the State Government is committed to addressing the clear longstanding deficiencies in service delivery in the Child Protection System. Reducing funding in earlier intervention whilst continuing to manage increasing costs to care arrangements is counter-productive, as the money saved will be easily negated by a continued failure to arrest the ongoing rise of the number of children in care and the costs associated with poor care experiences. Many young people exiting state care are at a significantly higher risk of entrenched disadvantage, homelessness, poor mental health, alcohol and other drug addiction as well as lifelong and costly interactions with tertiary and crisis services in the health system.

We urge the State Government to improve long term funding to Earlier Intervention, Family Support and Leaving Care services to ensure a more holistic care experience for young people that provides the support needed for young people to have positive life outcomes after leaving care.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. Significantly increase investment in future budgets for Earlier Intervention, Family Support and Leaving Care Services.
2. Clarify the future direction of the Home Stretch Trial and whether it will result in statewide investment in a leaving care model and/or legislative reform to raise the leaving care age.
3. Fund Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver integrated parenting support and early child development for families at-risk across the state and to provide care arrangements for those in care.

Youth Justice

Budget Highlights

- Investment in community-led justice diversion in the Kimberley.
- Lack of transparency and detail around youth justice funding.
- Increasingly punitive approach to detention, with little comparative investment in justice diversion for young people.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

Youth Justice in Western Australia has made little progress since the last State Budget, where YACWA called for radical change to fix this broken system. YACWA has called for reform in Banksia Hill Detention Centre for a number of years, yet little has been done to fix the problems with the State's only youth detention centre.

Western Australian's approach to youth justice has traditionally been largely punitive and focused on detaining rather than rehabilitating at-risk young people who have offended. With the onset of COVID-19, the State Government has a chance to drastically reshape the way they approach youth justice, in order to reduce costs on the system and mitigate the drastic economic and social impact the pandemic has had on vulnerable young people in other key areas.

Noting this, the Budget's investment in youth justice system includes:

- \$20.5 million to continue Target 120 Albany, Armadale, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, Kununurra and Mirrabooka as well as expand to further sites in the future.
- \$6.2 million for Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy, including night patrols, place-based activities, youth engagement and integrated learning programs.
- \$11.3 million to support and expand Police and Community Youth Centres (PCYC) in Carnarvon, Kununurra, Midland and Rockingham.
- \$1.4 million to work with Aboriginal Legal Service to implement a Youth Engagement Program, focused on increased bail support, access to legal representation and parole.
- \$6.8 million to continue the Aboriginal Community Connectors Program, which connects Aboriginal people in vulnerable situations with culturally responsive crisis support in 14 locations across the state.
- A decrease in funding for youth justice services from \$98.1 million in 2021-22 to \$94.6 million in 2023-24 - with no breakdown of funding streams for different services.
- \$314 million for additional 800 police officers. Key facts to note here are:
 - WA will now have the highest number of police officers per person of all states.
 - This is on top of previous commitments for 300 additional police officers.
- Continuation of the Mental Health Co-Response model, which partners clinicians with WA Police and provides early intervention and diversion from the criminal justice system into appropriate health system pathways.

Potential Impacts on Young People

YACWA is pleased to see that the Budget delivers some welcome investments in youth-specific early intervention, diversion and rehabilitation initiatives. Despite being announced prior to the budget, the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy and Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing Package in particular are welcome initiatives to foster whole-of-community and Aboriginal-led responses to keep young people out of the justice system.

Despite these positives, the Budget's spending on prevention and diversion is vastly inadequate when compared to significant investment for recruiting more Police Officers and the increasing costs of youth detention, which has increased by \$399 a day since last year's budget estimate.

The Budget forecasts that the average daily cost of young people managed through community supervision will decrease in 2020/21 despite total costs to Youth Justice Services rising by \$1.4 million in 2020/21. This suggests a greater focus on policing services, as opposed to the less costly community-based diversion services, which have largely shown to be significantly cheaper and more effective at rehabilitation, therefore reducing chances of recidivism. This will likely lead to a continued rise in costs for the State Government and an entrenchment of a cycle of recidivism and poor life outcomes for at-risk young people in WA.

We are also disappointed to see a continued lack of transparency regarding the breakdown of funding in Youth Justice services and the outcomes of existing early-intervention programs. For example, while ongoing funding for Target 120 is welcome there remains little public information available about the ongoing success of this program, and so we are concerned that the desired outcomes for young people engaged are not being met. There is also insufficient detail on funding allocations for Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Given historical instability and high rates of recidivism at the Centre, it is worrying to note that it is unclear how resources are being directed to support young people to have a positive life trajectory upon leaving the Detention Centre. The recent announcement of a purpose-built recording studio for young people in detention is welcome, however we urge the State Government to provide more transparency on initiatives such as this in the Budget.

Given the cost per day of keeping a young person in detention is forecast at \$1,366 compared to \$102 for community supervision it is imperative for the State Government to improve investment in community-based support for at-risk young people if it is to reduce long-term costs in detention. To reduce incarceration and recidivism for Aboriginal young people, it is imperative that Aboriginal-led justice reinvestment is prioritised to address the underlying causes of offending and improve long-term outcomes for at-risk young people in Western Australia.

Recommendations for Future Investment

1. Greatly expand investment in future budgets for Social Reinvestment initiatives that prioritise prevention, diversion and rehabilitation over criminalised detention and other punitive measures, to reduce the amount of entering and re-entering youth detention.

2. Increase investment in Community Supervision as a priority pathway over detention in Banksia Hill Detention Centre.
3. Clarify the current funding priorities in Banksia Hill Detention Centre, in particular the allocation of investment in therapeutic rehabilitation initiatives.
4. Expand the funding of education services within Banksia Hill Detention Centre, with strong collaboration and oversight from the Department of Education.

What Else is in the Budget?

Budget Highlights

- Positive investment in financial counselling services.
- Restructuring of key agencies to improve accountability and transparency, however more details are not available.
- Some funding increases to supplement funding for Community Services as part of the Equal Remuneration Order, however a commitment to fully match costs is not yet confirmed.

Overview – Key Investment Areas

Not all investment in the State Budget falls neatly into the categories above. Some of the important investment that sits outside of these includes:

- \$31.5 million supplementary funding for eligible not-for-profit sector contracts as part of COVID response (\$4.4m in new funding).
- A \$10 million investment into the Clean Energy Future Fund.
- \$25.6 million for the creation and management of national parks.
- \$6.8 million in funding for financial counselling services (as part of the WA Recovery Plan).
- \$180,000 for the Commissioner for Children and Young People to develop a National Child Friendly Complaints Resource and Speaking Out Survey in 2021.
- \$93 million to implement the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.
- The Department of Communities is restructuring to establish three centres of excellence: Specialist Child Protection Unit, Office of Disability and the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Unit. Although slightly different in role and focus, each centre is intended to have appropriate embedded Aboriginal cultural expertise and lived experience relevant to each portfolio, set the strategic direction for each portfolio and improve stewardship of these systems.
- The Department of Communities is developing an Aboriginal Cultural Capability Reform Program aiming to empower the workforce, carers and community sector organisations to partner with and work toward improved outcomes for Aboriginal people. This will be done by developing culturally competent staff who have a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and traditions, ensuring that culturally appropriate support is provided to Aboriginal people who access and engage services.

Potential Impacts on Young People

YACWA commends the State Government on its State Budget announcements of a number of important additional investments in initiatives such as expanding financial counselling services and the implementation of the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. Whilst the funding for the Clean Energy Future Fund and supplementation of eligible not-for-profit contracts is also welcome, YACWA is concerned this investment is insufficient in comparison to current need, as growing critical industries such as clean energy and the care sector must be a top priority to

secure a sustainable social, economic and environmental future of Western Australian young people.

YACWA is also interested to hear about the creation of the Specialist Child Protection Unit, Office of Disability and the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Unit. We hope that these will be successful in achieving the stated aim of enhancing integrity, transparency and accountability and await for more details on the specifics of these agencies as they are developed.