

Housing and homelessness

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

- **Breaking the cycle of homelessness**
\$42.3m in 2024-25 (\$196.9m/4 yrs) to deliver programs that support people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. This package continues funding for a range of initiatives that were at risk of lapsing, expands the Journey to Social Inclusion program, and establishes a new four-year competitive grants process from 2025-26 for homelessness services working to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.
- **Rental Stress Support Package**
\$1.2m in 2023-24 (\$8m/3 yrs) to organisations delivering support for renters in the private market so that Victorian households facing rental stress can gain access to information and advice, advocacy and legal assistance.

WHAT'S GOOD

- The homelessness package includes:
 - Re-investment in a range of homelessness support programs that were facing lapsing funding, including *Pride in Place*, the *Homelessness After Hours Services*, and *Better Health and Housing*. Each of these initiatives is an important part of Victoria's homelessness response – and we're pleased this Budget provides some reprieve. But, looking ahead, it's imperative that the Victorian Government locks in long-term funding. At this stage, some of the continuing funding is only for 12 months. The continued funding for *Pride in Place* will preserve access to specialised initial assessment and planning, case management and coordination, peer navigation and service navigation to connect LGBTIQ+ people with the services they need, when they need them. LGBTIQ+ Victorians are twice as likely to be at risk of, or experience, homelessness compared to other Victorians, and [research](#) shows they also experience more complex pathways and barriers within the homelessness system. So – while it's imperative that mainstream programs and services are safe and inclusive for LGBTIQ+ people – it's also vital that people have access to tailored services like *Pride in Place*.
 - Ten per cent of the homelessness package (\$11.5m) has been allocated to support the implementation of Victoria's Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*. The importance of strong, sustained investment to deliver *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* – literally "Every Aboriginal person has a home" – cannot be overstated. The housing crisis disproportionately impacts Victoria's First Peoples. More than one-in-six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Victorians have experienced homelessness, compared to one-in-76 non-Indigenous Victorians. This vast overrepresentation is a direct and ongoing consequence of colonisation and we must continue to reckon with this and support self-determined approaches to achieving housing justice.

- Journey to Social Inclusion is one of Victoria's earliest Housing First initiatives. The 'Breaking the cycle of homelessness' package includes funding to expand this model through the Early Intervention Investment Framework. The Budget papers project that a five-year investment of \$45.5m will yield between \$75m and \$80m in estimated avoided costs over 10 years and estimates between \$20m and \$40m in economic benefits. The package also includes \$16.7 million for the Homes for Families program to provide a Housing First response for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These are excellent investments, but VCOSS continues to call for the Victorian Government to fully embrace a Housing First approach. We stand alongside the Council to Homeless Persons in advocating for Housing First to be implemented at scale across Victoria. VCOSS also wants to see the benefits of a Housing First approach extended to other groups with multiple and complex needs, such as people experiencing poor physical or mental health, people with a disability, and people involved in the justice system.
- We welcome funding for services that provide vital support and accommodation to women experiencing homelessness. We note that family violence is a major driver of homelessness for women, and that the Victorian Government has foreshadowed there will be further family violence funding announcements in coming weeks. VCOSS hopes to see additional investments in housing as part of this package.
- The Rental Stress Support Package was one of eight rental fairness initiatives announced in the Victorian Government's Housing Statement, released in September 2023. This boost to information, advice, advocacy and legal assistance is timely, necessary and welcome. VCOSS's recent [Renting in Victoria](#) research found the hardship currently facing renters is staggering. Community sector workers told us the renters they support are feeling powerless, confused and insecure. They identified an urgent need to bolster resources for services that support renters to understand and assert their rights, sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

WHAT'S MISSING

- In the 2020 State Budget, the Victorian Government announced the nation-leading \$5.3b Big Housing Build – a historic investment into social housing growth. The Big Housing Build has catalysed a scale of investment in social housing in Victoria not seen for decades, but that money has now been fully allocated.

In our pre-Budget submissions, VCOSS and other Victorian Housing Peaks reiterated our long-standing call for *at least* 60,000 new social housing homes (public housing and community housing) to be built over the next 10 years. To achieve this, we need the Victorian Government to specify this as their growth target in all relevant policy instruments and, crucially, to establish a long-term investment pipeline that supports Victoria to achieve that growth target.

This Budget does not create the necessary conditions for strong and sustained growth in the construction of new social housing at the necessary scale.

- VCOSS’s pre-Budget submission called for the Victorian Government to invest in key enablers of social housing growth, such as the introduction of mandatory inclusionary zoning. While the Victorian Government’s Housing Statement notes developers have an important role to play in addressing our housing crisis – and includes measures that encourage developers to make big new residential developments feature 10 per cent affordable housing – we’d like to see a legislated measure that requires 10 per cent of new, large-scale housing developments to be public or community housing.
- While the homelessness package includes some funding for youth services, and this is welcome, the Budget doesn’t deliver funding for a Youth Homelessness Strategy that can coordinate action and investment to prevent youth homelessness from happening in the first place (and ensure that, when it does occur, it is brief and non-recurring).

What have VCOSS members had to say?

- [“Budget delivers small wins for housing but much more needed to ease crisis”](#), CHIA Victoria
- [“A welcome step to boost on the ground services for renters”](#). Tenants Victoria
- [“Victorian budget provides some homelessness relief but more needed.”](#) Council to Homeless Persons
- [“Positive Initiatives But More to Be Done in Victorian Budget.”](#) Victorian Public Tenants Association