

STATE BUDGET 2024 – WHAT’S IN IT FOR CARERS?

As foreshadowed by the Victorian Government and many media commentators, the 2024 Victorian State Budget had to balance the need for cost of living relief, growing demand for essential services and a challenging fiscal environment.

New initiatives included cost of living relief measures for families with children in public schools and eligible students in non-government schools. This will be \$400 per child towards school uniforms and excursions to be paid in term 1 2025.

Some high-profile infrastructure projects such as the Melbourne Airport Rail Link were delayed by at least four years. The rollout of Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (Locals) has been slowed. Evaluation of the first 15 Locals will occur throughout 2024 before the commissioning process of the next Locals. Some high-profile programs have been delayed or will end including the sick pay guarantee and a slower roll out of Four Year Old kinder, Pre-Prep.

In this environment, there were no new initiatives specifically targeted to carers but we were pleased to see government sustain its investment in carer respite, which will total some \$9.5 million in 2024-25.

There were also a range of new/expanded initiatives that may benefit some carers:

- \$6.8 million to triple the ‘glasses for kids’ program which provides free vision testing and prescription glasses for Prep to Year 3 students;
- \$211 million to keep women and children safe and support victim-survivors;
- \$32.8 million to continue and expand the Students with Disabilities Transport Program;
- \$24 million to continue support for Victorians with disability; and
- \$25.6 million for support and treatment of eating disorders, including supporting families and carers.

In health care, we saw \$13 billion of new funding, including \$1.7 billion to build and upgrade hospitals (Austin, Northern and Monash Medical Centre).

The longer-term challenge in the State Budget remains the significant interest bill payable on investment loans, with the budget forecasting that in 2024-25 this will cost \$6.5 billion.

More information about the State Budget, including links to a range of fact sheets about the different initiatives, can be found [here](#).