
VCOSS unveils comprehensive plan to fight inequality and boost wellbeing

Victoria's peak social advocacy body has unveiled a comprehensive plan to restore fairness and promote wellbeing during a time of growing inequality.

The Victorian Council of Social Service's 2018 state budget submission ***Building A Better Victoria*** contains 54 recommendations to improve the state's education, health, justice and social support systems, while also making housing and power more affordable for Victorians doing it tough.

VCOSS CEO Emma King said more than 700,000 Victorians are currently living below the poverty line.

"Every person in Victoria should be supported to live a good life," Ms King said.

"In practical terms, that means everybody should be supported to live with dignity and meaning. This includes getting a great education, staying healthy, living free from violence and abuse, having a roof over your head and receiving a decent income."

The VCOSS plan includes detailed measures to:

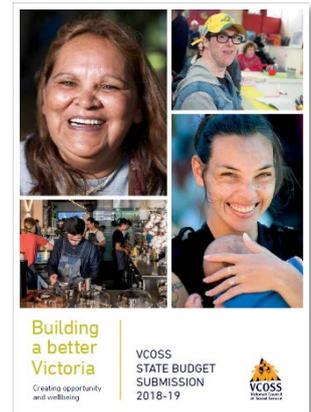
- **INCREASE** support for Victorians in energy hardship
- **FUND** two years of early childhood education for three and four year olds
- **BUILD** 30,000 new social housing properties
- **PHASE OUT** the state's child prisons
- **REPLACE** stamp duties with land tax
- **OVERHAUL** public transport fare concessions
- **CHAMPION** the social service workforce to meet job demand
- **PROVIDE** immediate housing to people 'sleeping rough', and
- **RESTRUCTURE** support for students with a disability.

"We can't give up on the dream of a Victoria genuinely free from poverty and disadvantage," Ms King said,

"We must constantly explore new ways to combat inequality, and support the frontline workers and volunteers who assist those in our community who are facing vulnerability or hardship."

Ms King said a copy of the document will be sent to every Victorian MP and department chief.

"This provides politicians and policymakers with a blueprint for how to make the state fairer, safer and more just," she said.



Read the plan at: vcoss.org.au/building-a-better-victoria

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12 key steps for a better Victoria



Develop the community services industry

Begin allocating funding to implement the proposals developed by the 10-Year Community Services Industry Plan.



Waive fees for high-growth community services qualifications

Waive fees for community services VET qualifications in high employment growth occupations for all Victorians facing barriers to employment or looking to retrain.



Accelerate social housing growth

Develop a plan to deliver 30,000 new social housing properties over the next 10 years to ensure all Victorians have a safe, secure and affordable place to live.



Introduce minimum rental standards

Define minimum health, safety and energy efficiency standards for all private rental homes, to save renters money and increase health and comfort.



Save community mental health

Allocate additional funding to preserve community mental health rehabilitation services during and after the transition to the NDIS.



Embed Aboriginal self-determination

Ensure Aboriginal organisations are funding adequately to ensure their communities' ongoing engagement in self-determination and treaty discussions.



Help students with disability thrive in education

Overhaul the Program for Students with Disabilities to appropriately support all students with disability.



Replace child prisons with better alternatives

Commit to closing Victoria's child prisons over the long-term and introducing a new system of youth justice, based on diversion, rehabilitation and intensive community support.



Increase focus on preventing family violence

Fund evaluation and scale-up effective family prevention strategies.



Keep supporting young people after they leave state care

Help young people leaving care develop independence by providing housing assistance and ongoing support until the age of 21.



Provide more funding for disability advocacy

Increase disability advocacy funding to \$5.1 million annually so all Victorians with disability have a voice.



Assist Victorians struggling with housing and energy costs

Deliver a comprehensive financial wellbeing package, with a focus on the needs of people facing debilitating housing and energy costs.



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