

Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF)

Significant initiatives

This Budget invests more than \$675 million into a diverse set of initiatives through the Early Intervention and Investment Framework (EIIF). This is an increase on the \$504 million invested in 2022-23 and \$324 million in 2021-22.

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals**
 \$22.5m in 2022-23 (\$90.5m/4 yrs) to establish three new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, and plan for 20 more. The locals will provide integrated mental health treatment and wellbeing supports. This funding also enables the continued delivery of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs and Partners in Wellbeing program.
- Specialist forensic mental health services**
 \$13.5m in 2022-23 (\$81.3m/4 yrs) for support for adults and young people with serious mental health needs who are in contact, or at risk of coming into contact, with the justice system.
- Sustained solutions for Housing First to end rough sleeping**
 \$19.1m in 2022-23 (\$67.6m/4 yrs) for multi-disciplinary support for individuals experiencing rough sleeping, including continued support for new and existing Homelessness to a Home clients.

What's good

- VCOSS welcomes the Government's continued commitment to investing in early intervention and improving outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage. The \$675m of funding invested through the EIIF will enable critical support for Victorians in mental health, housing, access to justice, preventative health, aged care and disability.
- The continuation and expansion of Housing First models for people experiencing rough sleeping and young people leaving residential care will have a transformative impact for many Victorians who are in most need of care and support.

What's missing

- While the investment into specialist support and care for people in custody or in contact with the justice system is much needed, VCOSS would consider this late intervention. As noted in the 'Fair and equal justice' section of this analysis, VCOSS will continue to advocate for a justice reinvestment strategy which would enable community-led approaches that prevent people from becoming involved in the justice system in the first place. Approaches such as this would strengthen the EIIF by directing funding towards earlier intervention and addressing root causes of issues.
- The funding dedicated to mental health and wellbeing services, child protection, aged care and disability is also welcome; however, many of these initiatives represent core government service provision and critical sector reforms.

Including these initiatives in the EIF risks diluting the purpose of the framework.

- For the EIF to achieve the stated goals of improving outcomes by offering assistance sooner, and curbing demand for acute services, funding needs to be directed at genuine early intervention and prevention initiatives. The Government can achieve this by enabling cross-departmental collaboration and leveraging the knowledge and expertise of the community and social sector to develop innovative programs that meet community needs and priorities.