

# Housing and homelessness

## Significant initiatives

- **Sustained solutions for Housing First to end rough sleeping**  
\$19.1m in 2022-23 (\$67.6m/4 yrs under the Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF) to expand Housing First supports, including supporting current and new clients of the highly successful *Homelessness to a Home* program.
- **Targeted housing and support to transform and meet critical demand**  
\$15.2m in 2022-23 (\$40.4/4 yrs) to extend funding for a range of existing programs, including the [Wyndham H3 Alliance](#) and supported housing services for women and young people.
- **Housing First for young people leaving residential care**  
\$5.8m in 2022-23 (\$32.6m/4 yrs) to deliver a Housing First approach (access to housing and multidisciplinary support) for approximately 225 young people with complex needs in existing residential care and other settings.

## What's good

- VCOSS welcomes this Budget's investment in Housing First responses, including the existing initiatives (*Homelessness to a Home* and *Homes for Families*) and a new program using a Housing First model of support for young people leaving residential care. *Homelessness to a Home* and *Homes for Families* have supported almost 2,000 people with long-term housing and wraparound support, and extending funding ensures these individuals and families can continue recovering from long-term challenges associated with experiences of chronic homelessness.
- This Budget invests in a range of initiatives that recognise the critical role of housing in addressing other challenges, including housing pathways for women on remand and short sentences, people exiting prison, and for young people leaving residential care, as well as the provision of health, mental health and AOD treatment services in three crisis accommodation facilities.
- VCOSS welcomes the new revenue measures introduced in this Budget, such as the transition from stamp duty to annual land tax on commercial property. They

## What's missing

- While Victoria has enacted a mammoth Rental Fairness agenda, with more than 130 reforms intended to improve the quality, safety and security of residential rental properties, these measures were designed in a pre-pandemic housing market. Victoria – like the rest of the nation – is in the midst of a housing crisis and renters are facing some of the toughest rental market conditions we've seen. VCOSS is keen to work with government, and other stakeholders, to consider new relief measures that can counter increasing rental costs and identify any new additional protections needed.
- The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) provides a critical safeguard for renters' rights, under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. However, VCAT is facing significant demand pressures, with over 22,000 matters pending hearing in 2022, and waiting times for some matters extending beyond 18 months. While investment was provided in last year's Budget to help Victoria's courts to manage demand lingering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the continued backlog at VCAT

show what's possible, when governments are willing to enact bold reform. Looking ahead, the Victorian Government can build on these foundations and advance further reforms in the next Budget that improve housing supply and affordability. Chief amongst these should be the introduction of a mechanism for big developer contributions to help create a pipeline of new social housing beyond 2024, as well as phasing in [stamp duty/land tax reform for residential property](#).

indicates a need for targeted investment and policy changes to better manage demand so that the promise of Victoria's Rental Fairness agenda can be realised.

- We are in the final year of the nation-leading Big Housing Build. While social housing stock is growing as part of this investment, it is not enough to meet current and future demand after decades of under-investment by previous state and federal governments. Victoria needs to build 60,000 new social housing properties over the next 10 years. Currently, there are more than 57,000 applications on the Victorian Housing Register. Nearly half of those are on the priority list, while the average waiting time for priority transfers for family violence is 20 months. This underscores the urgent need for further investment in social housing. We look forward to working with the State to plan the next steps in establishing a long-term pipeline of new social housing – VCOSS is keen that these next steps advance measures that ensure developers play their part.
- The Community Connectors program has been defunded. This initiative – a post-COVID successor to the High Risk Accommodation Response Program – has been delivered in high-density public housing clusters in Melbourne and other priority settings around the state. It has levered off the high-trust relationships and place-based expertise of community health services, employing teams of local residents, people with lived experience and health promotion workers to link people at their doorstep to preventative and early intervention health and social care services. For relatively modest outlay, Community Connectors has been a high-impact initiative that improves health equity for people who are experiencing deep exclusion and need active linking to connect to much-needed support. Community Connectors is exactly the type of program the government should sustain investment in, to drive down long-term demand and cost pressure on expensive, over-stretched acute services.