

# Keeping all Victorians healthy

## Significant initiatives

### Aboriginal Health

- **Dandenong and Districts Aborigines Co-operative accommodation**

\$9.7m in 2025-26 to fit-out and lease accommodation for the Dandenong and Districts Aborigines Co-operative Limited.

- **Supporting Aboriginal women on their journey into motherhood**

\$3.8m in 2025-26 (\$15.9m/4 yrs) to boost the capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver culturally-safe antenatal and postnatal care, establish Shared Care Arrangements with hospitals and midwifery group practices, and increase continuity between perinatal care and maternal and child health services, delivering on the priorities and commitments in the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Agreement.

### Mental Health

- **Expanding Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals services**

\$18.7m in 2025-26 (\$34.4m/2 yrs) to expand the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals service network in seven additional locations. Funding also continues delivery of community-based mental health and wellbeing supports through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs and the statewide intake hotline and wellbeing support program.

- **Community Mental Health Supports**

\$12.8m in 2025-26 (\$27.2m/4 yrs) to continue delivery of statewide community mental health programs that provide specialist support to cohorts experiencing mental ill-health and prevention initiatives that reduce mental distress and promote wellbeing, including Social Inclusion Action Groups.

- **Supporting groups disproportionately impacted by suicide**

\$6.1m in 2025-26 (\$7.5m/2 yrs) to prevent and respond to suicide amongst groups disproportionately impacted by suicide, including young people, LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- **Life-saving supports for trans and gender diverse young people**

\$3.6m in 2025-26 (\$15.3m/4 yrs) to support trans and gender diverse young people in Victoria to continue to access the care they need, including through specialist services at the Royal Children's Hospital and community-based mental health, peer and family support services

### Public Health and Community-Based Health Care

- Victoria's Frontline Public Health System**  
 \$35.5m in 2025-2026 (\$38.3m/4 yrs) for the continued operation of Local Public Health Units including intelligence and surveillance systems that strengthen public health prevention, protection, regulation and emergency response activities.
- Delivering the right care at the right time**  
 \$27.6m in 2025-26 (\$30m/4 yrs) funding is provided to maintain 12 Urgent Care Clinics to treat patients who require urgent, non-emergency care, as well as strengthening local primary care services in targeted communities.
- Supporting our pharmacists to deliver community care**  
 \$5.3m in 2025-2026 (18.1m/4 yrs). Part of this funding will be used to broaden the program to incorporate treatment of straightforward health conditions and chronic disease management by community pharmacists.
- Improving women's health**  
 \$1.7m in 2025-2026 (\$5.6m/4 yrs) to support the health of Victorian women and girls by improving access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- Support for asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees**  
 \$3.4m in 2025-26 to maintain healthcare support for refugees and asylum seekers, including general practitioner care, case coordination, and basic needs and homelessness assistance for people ineligible for Commonwealth supports or services.

#### Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Alcohol and other drug community support services**  
 \$8.2m in 2025-26 (\$10.7m/2 yrs) to continue to mitigate alcohol and other drug related harms across Victoria. This includes outreach services in North Richmond for people who inject drugs, the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnerships program and addressing pharmacotherapy service gaps. Funding will also support First Step, providing mental health and addiction support services.
- Mental Health Capital Renewal Fund 2025-26**  
 \$10.0m in 2025-26 to improve the quality and amenity of mental health and alcohol and other drugs facilities across Victoria.
- Strengthening alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation services**  
 \$8.7m in 2025-26 (\$33.5m/4 yrs) to maintain the treatment capacity of alcohol and other drug services in residential settings.
- Supporting Community Sector Jobs**  
 \$2.2m in 2025-26 (\$8.8m/4 yrs) for the community sector workforce in the AOD sector

#### What's good

- Investment in community health has been maintained in what was expected to be a tough Budget, and the Local Public Health Units, whose funding was lapsing, will continue to be in place (although their funding is significantly lower than in previous budgets). Continued funding for the Epidemic

Thunderstorm Asthma Program and extreme weather alert system is welcome – these initiatives enable Victorians to prepare for the health-related impacts of climate change.

- The 2025-26 Budget makes positive investments in Urgent Care Clinics and community pharmacy, although these and other investments in community-based care are outstripped by record expenditure on hospitals. The Victorian Government will provide hospitals with an additional \$9.3 billion of operating expenditure over the next four years and invest \$643 million for new and expanded hospitals. While this will be welcomed by Victorians needing urgent care close to home, some of this money could be more productively spent on prevention, early intervention, and home and community-based care delivered by independent community health services.
- After extensive advocacy from the Aboriginal Community Controlled health and wellbeing sector, the Dandenong and Districts Aborigines Co-operative will finally have the resources it needs to move into fit-for-purpose accommodation to deliver clinical, social and emotional wellbeing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Melbourne’s south-east. This has been a top infrastructure priority for the sector. Looking ahead, the Victorian Government should deliver funds to respond to Infrastructure Victoria’s advice that, across the state, \$100–\$150 million is still needed to meet immediate infrastructure needs of Victorian health and wellbeing ACCOs and an extra \$30 million for urgent infrastructure maintenance.
- VCOSS welcomes funding for outreach services in North Richmond, the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnerships program, and funding to address pharmacotherapy service gaps, which will reduce drug-related deaths. We are pleased to see some funding allocated to strengthening the capacity of residential AOD services, though we note the allocation is smaller than previous budgets. There is also some continued investment in the AOD workforce to meet demand and start to address the capacity issues. More will be required on this front, to support the sector to reduce wait times and meet growing demand for services.
- Across almost every measure of health and wellbeing, LGBTIQ+ people fare significantly worse than non-LGBTIQ+ people. This is a consequence of the stigma and discrimination that many LGBTIQ+ people encounter – including in the health system. This Budget includes welcome investments such as funding to support trans and gender diverse young people in Victoria to continue to access the care they need, including through specialist services at the Royal Children’s Hospital and community-based mental health, peer and family support services. Looking ahead, there are further opportunities for government to strengthen access to essential healthcare for LGBTIQ+ Victorians, including a LGBTIQ+ Women’s Health Hub that can provide more tailored psychosocial, mental and sexual health promotion for queer women.

## What’s missing

### Aboriginal Health

- Aboriginal Victorians are more likely to experience ill-health and to die young than the rest of the population. Self-determination is key to closing this health equity gap. This includes strong investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. VCOSS shares the community’s disappointment

that, despite some wins, the Budget falls short in several key areas. [VACCHO has particularly highlighted](#) the failure to allocate funding to implement key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, despite the well-documented mental health crisis in Aboriginal communities.

### Public Health and Community-Based Health Care

- Victoria's independent registered community health services put essential healthcare in reach for Victorians who are struggling with the cost of living and other health inequities. They prevent illness and disease through health promotion and early intervention. They also provide assessment, treatment, health maintenance and continuing care in people's homes and community settings, reducing pressure on hospitals. In the past year, the number of Victorians accessing independent registered community health services grew by 20 per cent. This Budget has not delivered the sector with the increased resources it needs to meet growing demand.
- While it is promising to see some funding for pharmacists to deliver chronic disease management, the Budget has failed to invest in preventative health initiatives in line with Australia's National Health Prevention Strategy. Preventative health action is key to achieving healthy and thriving communities, a more sustainable health system, and a healthier budget bottom line. Our pre-Budget submission called for an expansion of access to rural and regional drop-in clinics for chronic disease health checks, health education and assistance with service navigation, delivered by the 11 independent registered rural and regional community health services.
- The Budget has failed to deliver what's needed to strengthen public dental health. VCOSS called for an additional \$40 million a year for a minimum of five years in our 2025-26 pre-Budget submission. Currently, funding only allows for dental visits every seven years (on average) and up to 1.5 million people are missing out on adequate care. This puts people at increased risk of oral health diseases, diabetes and other chronic conditions. It's completely out-of-step with best-practice early intervention and cost avoidance approaches.

### Mental Health

- Consumers, carers, service providers and peak bodies have expressed universal concern about the status of system reform in light of Budget outcomes. While VCOSS is pleased to see a commitment of funding to roll out another seven Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, [we are aware that Mental Health Victoria \(MHV\) has raised some questions](#) about the quantum of funds compared with the level of investment in the first 15. Like MHV, VCOSS is keen to understand the detail and impact.
- The Government's updated reform plan shows that the *Statewide Wellbeing Strategy* and the *Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework* are due for imminent release. However, they are not identified in the Budget. VCOSS will be seeking clarification about whether provision has been made for implementation. We are concerned that there appears to be no new funding for the *Diverse Communities Grants Program*.