

Keeping All Victorians Healthy

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

First Nations Health

- **Wathaurong Dreaming Project**
\$12.7 million in 2026-27 (\$26.4 million/2 years) to redevelop *Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative's* premises in North Geelong, delivering a fit-for-purpose, culturally safe space designed to provide comprehensive and integrated health and wellbeing services to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Community Health

- **Community-based chronic disease program**
\$4.3 million in 2026-27 (\$21.2 million over 4 years) to deliver additional hours of care for more than 4,500 people living with a chronic disease through registered community health services.
- **Home and Community Care Program for Younger People**
Supports for people with disability outside of the NDIS \$22.5 million in 2026-27 to maintain delivery of the *Home and Community Care Program for Younger People*

Mental Health

- **Expanding Thomas Embling Hospital**
\$9.6 million in 2026-27 (\$125.1 million/ 4 years) for 40 new forensic mental health beds.
- **Supporting groups disproportionately impacted by suicide**
\$5.4 million in 2026-27 (\$6.5 million/2 years) to continue the LGBTQIA+ aftercare program delivered by Mind Australia; the Standby Support After Suicide postvention program; and clinical uplift support for the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program. Funding also continues Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention led by the Balit Durn Durn Centre and the Aboriginal Medico-Legal Support Officer position at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs**
\$4.9 million in 2026-27 to continue the community-based Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs network, which provides accessible mental health and wellbeing support to Victorians across the state.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

- **Victoria Pill Testing**
\$5.4 million in 2026-27 (\$9.6 million/2yrs) to establish Victoria's first fixed-site drug checking

service in Melbourne's CBD alongside a mobile drug checking service, enabling people who use drugs to make safer, more informed decisions and avoid accidental overdose. These services remove stigma from what is fundamentally a health issue and reflects an evidence-based approach to harm reduction.

- **Public Intoxication Services**

\$28.5 million in 2026-27 (\$52.3 million over 2 years) to continue a health led response to the decriminalisation of public intoxication and deliver improved outcomes to vulnerable communities. This includes the continuation of general outreach and sobering service response in Metro Melbourne. As well as specific First nations-led outreach, monitoring and evaluation and places of safety to support a health-led response to public intoxication, and a self-determined pharmacotherapy model.

Women's Health

- **Preventative health support for Victorian women**

\$9.8 million in 2026-27 (\$10.4m/2years) for preventative health support for Victorian women, including peer-led sexual health services for sex workers and support for 12 women's health organisations across Victoria.

WHAT'S GOOD

- The *Community-Based Chronic Disease Program* will support more than 4,500 Victorians living with chronic illness to better manage their health and get care closer to home, without the need to go to hospital. This type of investment in community-based care will help clients navigate the health system, improve their health literacy and engagement, and connect them with services and programs to manage their condition in the community. The four-year investment provides certainty for both community health providers and the people they serve.
- The *Wathaurong Dreaming Project* is a welcome investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) health infrastructure. Fit-for-purpose facilities are foundational to ACCOs being able to deliver the comprehensive, integrated and culturally safe care that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need and have a right to expect. While we support this investment VCOSS and VACCHO note that significant need for infrastructure persists across the state. VACCHO and Infrastructure Victoria identified that \$150 million is required to meet the

immediate health and wellbeing infrastructure needs of Victorian ACCOs, with a further \$30 million per year needed for urgent maintenance¹.

- Additional investment in forensic mental health through the *Thomas Embling Hospital* to provide secure, specialised therapeutic treatment for patients with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system. These new beds will free up prison bed capacity and support appropriate care outside of a custodial setting. Funding for expansion reflects an important recognition that people with severe mental illness in the criminal justice system deserve therapeutic treatment, not simply incarceration.
- Continued funding of \$22.5 million for the *Home and Community Care Program* will enable independent living in the home and community for people with disability outside the NDIS. Funding is also provided to assess people with disability seeking to have allied health supports included within their NDIS plans. VCOSS notes that the funding is a one-year allocation only. Thousands of Victorians with disability rely on this program to live independently, but short-term funding drives instability across the workforce and services to plan ahead, weakening the support that enables independent living.

WHAT'S MISSING

- Community health services are the backbone of primary and preventative care for low-income and vulnerable Victorians, delivering integrated, low-barrier services that reduce illness and ease pressure on hospitals. Demand has continued to grow while core funding has not meaningfully increased. The Budget provided no core funding uplift for community health services, despite rising demand and complexity. VCOSS proposed a \$100 million investment over four years; without additional funding, services will need to meet growing need within existing resources, limiting access for higher-need communities and increasing pressure on the acute system over time.
- Equally absent is any commitment to the Community Health Infrastructure Fund. VCOSS called for a \$200 million capital fund to address the chronic underinvestment in community health buildings and equipment. Many community health centres operate in facilities that are decades old and are simply not fit for the integrated, multi-disciplinary service models that communities need.

¹ **Title:** Investing in Aboriginal health and wellbeing infrastructure: securing safe and sustainable Community-controlled care

Authors: Infrastructure Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

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<https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/resources/investing-in-aboriginal-health-infrastructure>

Without fit-for-purpose infrastructure, the sector cannot deliver the scope and quality of care required.

- This Budget again failed to fund critical First Nations health priorities, including the two Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Centres recommended by the [Royal Commission into the Victorian Mental Health System](#). For the second consecutive year, this disregards the Royal Commission's call for Aboriginal-led healing infrastructure to strengthen Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing and the priorities of the Aboriginal community controlled health sector. Without sustained investment in ACCOs, Victoria will fall short on Closing the Gap commitments and delivering genuine Aboriginal health equity. VCOSS also notes that funding was not allocated for several other priorities identified by the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector which support foundational infrastructure, services and self-determination including health and wellbeing infrastructure for the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place, an Aboriginal-led model of custodial health care and strengthening oral and dental health for Aboriginal Victorians.
- A major structural gap in Victoria's mental health system is the absence of adequate early intervention psychosocial supports for people with serious mental illness who do not qualify for the NDIS but need more support than a GP can provide. For this growing cohort, evidence-based prevention, treatment, care and support remain out of reach. While VCOSS called for the scaling of these services in our pre-Budget submission, no dedicated initiative was identified in this Budget. This leaves a large group of Victorians without the support they need and places continued pressure on acute mental health services and hospital emergency departments.
- The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is a globally recognised health promotion agency with a critical role in preventing illness and reducing long-term demand on Victoria's health system. Its effectiveness relies on statutory independence, which enables long-term, population-wide prevention, cross-sector collaboration and evidence-based investment decisions. Evidence demonstrates that every dollar invested in preventive health delivers approximately \$14 in savings across healthcare and broader social costs. Failure to protect VicHealth's independence and funding undermines Victoria's preventive health infrastructure and increases avoidable pressure on acute and downstream services.
- While there is continuation of funding for AOD treatment services, the sector's overall capacity has not been meaningfully expanded. As demand for AOD services continues to grow, the community sector has consistently called for an uplift in community-based treatment capacity. Wait times remain too long, and many Victorians cannot access vital treatment when they are ready to engage.