

Sustainability of Services

This budget provides welcome support for some community services, including increases in funding for financial counselling, family and domestic violence services, and the expansion of the School Breakfast Programs.

But more is needed to support the sector, which is buckling under demand while trying to maintain current services amid strong population growth and a cost of living crisis.

This budget focuses on the physical infrastructure the State needs to keep up with the demands of a growing population, but there is not enough investment in the State's social infrastructure.

WA needs a long-term plan to ensure our social infrastructure keeps pace with changing community need.

Our sector needs sustainable funding to deliver these important services: indexation which reflects award conditions and years of underfunding, and funding which covers the true cost of delivering services. WACOSS is also deeply concerned about the financial impact of commissioning delays.

WACOSS will continue to work for genuinely sustainable funding for the sector so it can continue to help Western Australians in need. This includes a commitment from the State Government for a one-off catch-up injection to reflect historical underfunding and the significant demands on the sector.

WA Labor 2025 Election Commitments

Initiative	Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) Initiatives
Status	<i>Partially funded (BP2, V2, P494)</i>
Investment	\$36 million
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$8.1 million over 3 years for FDV Support for Children and Young People; • \$1.53 million over 4 years for the Safe at Home program; • \$21.78 million over 4 years for the Safe House Uplift; • \$5.05 million for Targeted Family and Sexual Violence Frontline Services.
Implications	<p><i>This includes the support towards planning and business case development for the expansion of Albany and Geraldton refuge capacity, and further expansions of FDV refuges at five locations across the State.</i></p> <p><i>The Safe at Home program will reach an additional seven locations, including several in regional Western Australia. While these initiatives support victim survivors of FDV, more funding is required in preventing FDV from happening in the first place.</i></p>

Election Commitment	\$19.5 million boost in housing and homelessness support
Status	<i>Funded (BP2, V2, P493 & P496 & P598)</i>
Investment	\$19.5 million over 4 years
Description	This funding includes \$6 million over four years for the Community Housing Capacity Building Program; \$10.4 million over four years for metropolitan homelessness outreach expansion; and \$3.06 million over four years for Housing First Support Services Expansion – Bunbury.
Implications	<i>This funding will increase access to support for people experiencing homelessness.</i>

Election Commitment	Fund 16 Police and Community Youth Centres
Status	<i>Partially Funded (BP3, P134 & BP2, V2, P400)</i>
Investment	\$10.5 million over four years
Description	This funding includes \$5.5 million for sustainability for the Police and Community Youth Centres across Western Australia (bringing the total approved sustainability funding to \$24 million). This package includes \$5 million to continue the delivery of SafeSPACE programs, extending the PCYC SafeSPACE Program at five locations into 2025-26 and 2026-27.
Implications	<i>This is welcome support for the sustainability of early intervention, diversionary, and recreational programs for young people, especially in regional WA.</i>

Election Commitment	School Breakfast expansion
Status	<i>Funded (BP2, V1, P353 & P354 & BP3, P129)</i>
Investment	\$28.5 million over 4 years
Description	The Government will invest an additional \$28.5 million over 2025-26 to 2028-29 to expand the School Breakfast Program from two to five days per week for schools currently participating in the program, and to expand the program to additional schools under broadened socio-economic eligibility criteria. The program will be available at over 670 locations under the expanded program. The Budget Papers further commit to funding beyond the four outyears, with a total investment of \$37.2 million over 2025-26 to 2029-30.
Implications	<i>This targeted cost of living relief will meaningfully reduce food costs for families doing it tough. It will also encourage school engagement and set kids up to learn.</i>

Other Significant Investments

Initiative	Financial Counselling Uplift
Investment	\$3 million over 2 years (BP2, V2, P494)
Description	This is additional funding to financial counselling services for 2025-26 and 2026-27.
Implications	<i>Financial counsellors offer free support for people experiencing financial difficulty. They often serve as a critical entry point to other community support services.</i>

Initiative	Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services and Indigenous Healing Services
Investment	\$650,000 over two years* (BP2, V2, P494) (future funding required)
Description	The budget papers show a significant drop in future funding compared to the 2024-25 Budget allocation. This reflects the fact that we are partway through the commissioning process.
Implications	<p><i>CSATS & IHS services are currently being recommissioned and a codesign process is underway with existing service providers, led by the Department of Communities, with support from WACOSS and input from the Australian Centre for Child Protection.</i></p> <p><i>These services are crucial to broader State commitments to implement Royal Commission recommendations, The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, and respond to the findings of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (with 1 in 4 Australians victims of child sexual abuse) and have been identified as a major priority.</i></p> <p><i>WACOSS and the CSATS service network developed case studies of sustainable funding and a consultation and survey process is underway with existing services to develop a pricing and costing tool and inform a new bid for sustainable funding and service growth to meet unmet need.</i></p>

Initiative	Home Stretch
Investment	Partially Funded (BP2, V2, P509) – Future funding required
Description	<p>Home Stretch is a program to support young people leaving state care to successfully transition to independent living. It has been developed in partnership between Communities and a number of service providers, with recent expansion of the pilot program to include more regional services and ACCO providers.</p> <p>The budget papers currently show the program fully funded this year at \$14 million, but a drop of funding down to \$3 million in future years.</p> <p>This is because a commitment has been made to extend the program, but work still needs to be done to fully cost it.</p>

<p>Implications</p>	<p><i>An announcement was made by Minister Winton last year with an in-principle commitment to expand the program statewide and make it ongoing, as it was previously funded as a time-limited trial.</i></p> <p><i>However, work is still needed to cost the program based on modelling the population of care leavers going forward, and then further funding will be allocated.</i></p> <p><i>“Home Stretch WA program continues to see positive demand and retention of young people who leave OOHC at the age of 18 years, supporting them to transition to independent adulthood by providing extended support and resources up until the age of 21 years.” BP2, V2, P495</i></p> <p><i>Media Release:</i> https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/home-stretch-wa-now-rolled-out-across-wa-463-million-of-additional-funding-provided</p>
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