



Charity gives, justice changes.

MEDIA RELEASE
Tuesday 3 May, 2011

Providing care across the continuum.

The first budget of the new Victorian coalition government brings some welcome funding for additional services for our most vulnerable children and young people, and marks what we hope will be a continuing social investment in strategically targeted intensive support.

This budget also holds promise that the value of providing a continuum of services from prevention, through to early intervention, integration with universal services and intensive support programs is understood by this government.

At the early intervention end of the spectrum, the initiative of additional ante and post natal support for vulnerable mothers is particularly important, as is the proposed pilot child care program for at-risk children. At the other end of the spectrum, the increased number of child protection workers and places in out-of-home care will reduce some of the system pressure.

The planned holistic assessments for children entering care, and the transitional program to assist care leavers into education and employment, recognize and address the past failure to adequately equip care leavers for adulthood.

We are also very pleased to see the introduction of an Independent Children's Commissioner and hope that the powers of that office include systemic reviews.

In the area of young people, the Youth Foyers are especially exciting collaborations tackling youth homelessness and providing a model for partnerships and wrap-around services. The additional investment in a range of mental health services for young people is also particularly welcome.

Young refugees are a very vulnerable group, and for newly arrived African communities there are positive innovations in the budget: at the preventative end, community education workshops

and leadership development, and for disadvantaged young people, expansion of support to new locations through the Centre for Multicultural Youth. We believe more community development initiatives are needed to support these communities and look forward to building on these developments.

Within schools, investment in programs targeted to disadvantaged students is extremely important in improving educational and employment outcomes. Ensuring every primary school has a welfare officer will enable vulnerable children and families to take advantage of schooling and the community service sector will welcome opportunities to work alongside the welfare staff.

Equally important is strengthening the alternative and flexible education settings available to students. We are very excited at the government's commitment to this through funding, policy and pilot programs. Disadvantaged students will also benefit from the increased vocational education opportunities, including fee concessions.

Low income Victorians will welcome the government's promised year-long concessions and rebates in the area of energy and water costs and we appreciate the commitment to maintaining affordability for all Victorians in an uncertain future.

We hope additional resources can be found for some unmet needs. It is disappointing that our Child First programs will not have a funding boost for their crucial work in preventing child protection intervention and, while we are pleased to see increased carer information and hotline support, greater support to foster care and funding for respite care for families and foster carers are also required urgently.

Commitment to a continuum of care is also needed for those women and their children leaving family violence for whom more intensive support (beyond 12 months) is required to prevent re-entering the cycle of violence. Social and affordable housing policies are an ongoing and urgent priority.

The community sector's capacity to join with the government will, we hope, be boosted by the government's support for pay equity in the community sector. We congratulate the Victorian



Charity gives, justice changes.

government on the positive initiatives of this budget and look forward to working with them to develop effective interventions to address the challenges we face together.

Dr. Kathy Landvogt
Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
Acting Manager, Social Policy and Research
Ph. 9418 3015
0438 266 785