



MEDIA RELEASE

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RELEASE DATE: 04/05/10

RIGHTS TO CARE, SAFETY AND RESPECT

The Victorian Government today delivered a hopeful budget for the future, confirming our economic recovery process but also increasing care options for vulnerable children, providing some additional supports for low income Victorians, and upholding the rights of women to safety and respect. It also shows promising signs of developing a more holistic response to at-risk young people.

“An increase in the unit cost funding of family support is a very welcome recognition of the real costs of providing services and will enable Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service to give more intensive support to families under stress”, Acting CEO Robyn Roberts said today. “More resources in the child protection system overall will also support our work and enable more flexible individual responses. The funding of kinship care for Indigenous families is an important innovation which we look forward to being extended to other out-of-home care services. We also recognise the importance of the government’s additional support for the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner, and the expanded use of mediation in the Children’s Court”. At the primary service level, the government’s continued investment in Children’s Centres will strengthen families and ensure early intervention is available across the state.

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service also applauds the Brumby Government’s pledge of \$14 million to changing community attitudes towards family violence as part of its *A Right to Respect* agenda. “Preventative strategies such as these are an integral part of sustaining

real, positive change in our communities” says Ms Roberts. “We have seen an increase in demand for our domestic violence support services, and investment in early intervention helps ensure the community sector is sustainable”.

In relation to at-risk young people, the additional support services proposed for those vulnerable to mental illness and suicide are very welcome. The proposal of an additional 55 youth workers is also positive, especially if those workers take a youth-centred, holistic approach and are based in the community sector accessible to at-risk youth. While the government’s continuing investment in the school building program is very important, we are concerned that without more targeted efforts to remove barriers to education for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, the goal of 90% of students completing Year 12 will be unattainable.

For the people we work with at Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, there is good news in the increased funding to Legal Aid which will give them access to their legal rights, and in the Brumby Government’s continued commitment to increases in water concessions.

In balancing the future needs of Victorians, we encourage the government to continue to keep individual rights and respect for all as fundamental principles.