

2025–26 Victorian State Budget

Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP

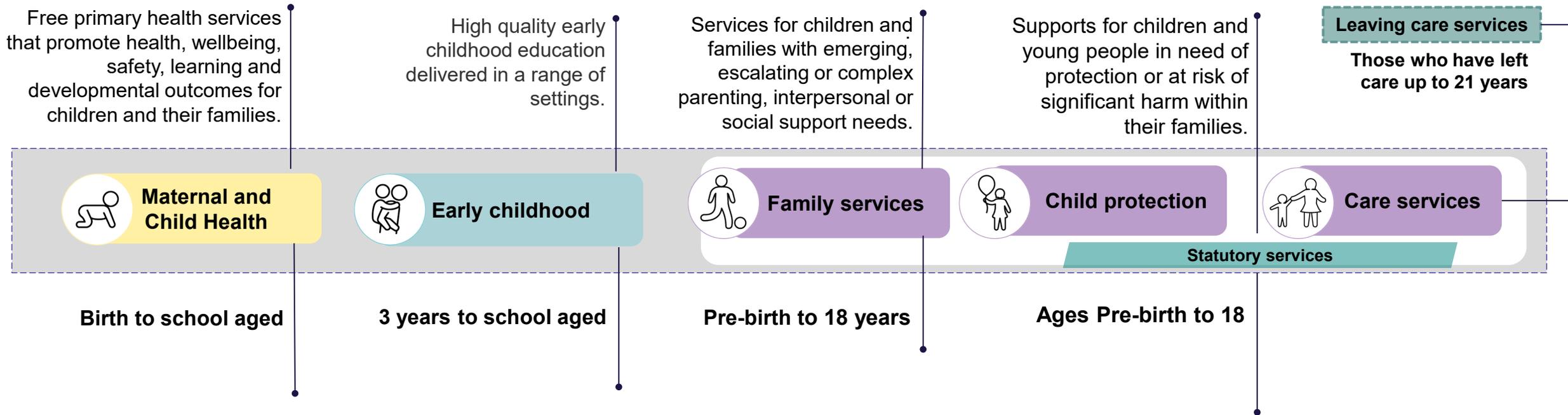
Minister for Children

10 June 2025



Families,
Fairness
and Housing

Victoria's Children Portfolio



Our vision: equity of outcomes and access for Victorian children and families

Statewide Maternal and Child Health services

Every child and family has access to Maternal and Child Health services in Victoria to ensure they have the best start to life.



600,000

Key ages and stages consultations (23-24)



15,600

families supported by Enhanced MCH consultations (23-24)



109,000

Callers supported by the 24/7 MCH line (23-24)



Giving children the best possible start in life

- › The 2025-26 State Budget invests **\$22.4 million** over four years and **\$5.9 million** ongoing to fund the operation of Early Parenting Centres at Ballarat, Bendigo, Casey, Geelong, Whittlesea and Wyndham.
- › This builds on 2019-20 State Budget investment of **\$19 million** ongoing to operate the expanded Early Parenting Centre network across the state.
- › Since 2019-20, the Victorian Government is expanding the network from 3 to 13 EPC across the state, including the first ever Aboriginal-dedicated Early Parenting Centre.



Early childhood education

Our Best Start, Best Life reforms are the most significant change to Victoria's early childhood sector in a generation. In 2024:



Around

143,000

children benefitted from Free Kinder.



96%

of eligible children attended Four-Year-Old Kinder, benefitting **78,500** children.



90%

of eligible children attended Three-Year-Old Kinder, benefitting **70,000** children.



88%

of services offered **15** hours a week of Three-Year-Old Kinder.



Giving children the best possible start in education

- › **The 2025–26 Victorian Budget invests close to \$2 billion** to continue our Best Start, Best Life reforms.
- › This means we are
 - » delivering more hours of **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten** across the state, with 88% of services offering a 15-hour-a-week program
 - » continuing **Free Kinder**, with families saving up to **\$2,627** per child
 - » offering more hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten through **Pre-Prep** in regional areas and for priority groups
 - » supporting the planning and operation of **50 new government-run** early learning and childcare centres.



Improving equity and access to early childhood education

- › **The 2025–26 Victorian Budget’s investment also provides:**
 - » \$15 million in Building Blocks Improvement and Inclusion grants
 - » \$16.3 million to support equal participation in early education and care
 - » \$5.3 million to increase kindergarten funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and support them to deliver tailored programs that respond to the needs of their communities
 - » \$3.1 million to deliver early childhood intervention services, such as therapy supports to children with disability or developmental delay who are not eligible for the NDIS due to their residency status



Child Protection and Family Services

In 2025-26, overall investment for child protection and family services is **\$2.2 billion**, an increase of **51.3** per cent since 2019-20



19,811

families supported for family services in 2023-24.



139,612

reports to child protection services in 2023-24.



73%

of Aboriginal children placed with relatives, kin, other Aboriginal carers or in Aboriginal residential care in 2023-24.



Helping families stay connected and strong

- › **The 2025-26 State Budget** invests **almost \$272 million** over four years for child protection and family services to better protect kids, including:
 - › **\$167.4 million** over two years to continue earlier interventions to keep families together and safe
 - › **\$90.1 million** to support kids in out-of-home care and to provide carers essential supports
 - › **\$14.1 million** supporting our frontline child protection workers
- › Families who engage with family services are **29 per cent** less likely to proceed to a child protection substantiation
- › Alongside investment, improvements to child protection made to provide greater capacity by increasing frontline roles, streamlining oversight and decision making and enhancing supervision and support to staff



Further enhancing Aboriginal led service delivery

- › **The 2025-26 State Budget** also invests in Aboriginal-led service delivery including:
 - » **Nearly \$25 million** to increase capacity for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to care for Aboriginal children in statutory care and expand the nation-leading Community Protecting Boorais program
 - » This funding also supports the important work of the Aboriginal Children's Forum and the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance
 - » This builds on 2023-24 State Budget investment of **\$140 million** over four years for Aboriginal children and families.



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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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In this presentation, ‘Aboriginal’ refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Koori/Koorie’ is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

Available at <<https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-2025-26-budget-estimates/hearings>>.