



NSW 2023-24 Budget  
and Young People  
September 2023



# Acknowledgment of Country

Youth Action acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We understand that sovereignty was never ceded and recognise their continuing connection to lands, languages, waters, and cultures.

Our office is located upon the land of the Gadigal people. We recognise their traditional and ongoing Custodianship, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.



# About Youth Action

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and the services that support them in NSW. We work towards a society where all NSW young people are supported, engaged, valued, and have their rights realised. We represent over 150 Member organisations and regularly engage with young people and youth workers from all over the state, as we have for over 30 years.

We give a particular focus to young people who are regional, First Nations, LGBTIQ+, with disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including migrants and refugees, and doing it tough. We use a rights-based lens to focus on programs, policy and advocacy that achieve meaningful outcomes, embed strengths-based approaches, and are informed by data and evidence. We are an ally to the self-determination of First Nations communities, are led by the expertise of young people and the Sector, and work to be a trust-worthy partner and collaborator.

## Youth Action

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# Introduction

Young people in NSW continue to live with the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, with intergenerational inequity meaning that some young people are hit particularly hard. All areas of their lives have been impacted from education and how they learn, their mental health and wellbeing, their families and connections to communities and support networks, where they call home, and their employment and future career opportunities.

There are welcomed announcements in the Budget which specifically address these impacts on young people through cost-of-living relief; reinvestment in the child protection system; the introduction of permanent numeracy and literacy support for young people falling behind at school; the creation of a multicultural youth network platform; investment in building new and upgraded schools; measures to increase housing supply through reinvestment in Landcom and the Essential Housing Package, the funding for a 12 month consultation process with First Nations communities in NSW to inform a pathway to treaty and focus on Closing the Gap initiatives that will tackle overrepresentation of First Nations young people in the care and the justice systems, access to culturally appropriate mental health support and early intervention programs.

However, as can be seen in the Budget announcements listed below, benefits to young people will come predominantly through their inclusion in larger population groups rather than through targeted support measures. It is heartening to see investment aimed at improving outcomes for the community in relation to issues such as such homelessness, domestic and family violence,

mental health, and cost of living. However we know that young people are less likely to access universal supports and services, especially those from socially excluded groups. This invisibility of young people as an identified priority means there is a very real risk that many will not receive the assistance they need and will fall further behind.

Our recent [Key Recommendations Report](#) and [Cost of Living Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Cost of Living](#) contained a number of recommendations co-designed with young people and the services who support them. The recommendations recognised the unique experiences of young people as a population group and highlighted the need for specialist youth programs and services across areas such as cost-of-living, employment, mental health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, and domestic and family violence. They also recommended investment in the preventative, early intervention, and youth development function of the youth sector to strengthen social capital and young people's capacity to participate in their communities.

There was a missed opportunity again in this Budget to invest in supports and services to address the challenges faced by those young people particularly affected by the housing and cost of living crises through building the social infrastructure needed to establish the conditions for young people to thrive and reach their full potential.

# Responses from Peaks



[NCOSS Budget Response](#)



[Homelessness NSW Budget Response](#)



[Community Housing Industry Association Budget Response](#)



[Mental Health Coordinating Council Budget Response](#)



[Fams Budget Response](#)

# Summary of key announcements impacting young people

## Child protection

- \$200 million for children and young people who need Out-of-Home Care to provide permanency services and post-care support. The majority of this will go towards NGO service providers and the provision of emergency arrangements for children and young people who cannot live safely at home.
- The government also states in its Budget that it will be setting out long-term plans to reform the child protection system and repair the budget, as part of its plan to rebuild essential services and take pressure off families and businesses. Over the three years from 30 June 2020 to 30 June 2023 there has been a tripling in the number of children in expensive emergency arrangements, including hotels and motels, and an increase in the average length of stay for all placement types.

## Regional Young People

- Central West and Orana: \$847 286 Regional Youth Investment Future Ready Program.
- Hunter: \$483 515 for the Connected to Care program to provide support services to young people experiencing disadvantage and \$50 000 for the Aim High project through the Foster Neighbourhood Centre.
- Illawarra: \$49 903 Illawarra Young Women's Program and \$48 400 Aboriginal cultural mentoring for disengaged youth.
- New England and North West: \$1.3 million for Keep on Track program.

## First Nations young people

### Closing the Gap

- Ongoing investment of \$131.4 million to support 28 Closing the Gap initiatives, including:
  - \$34.1 million to tackle overrepresentation of First Nations children and young people in the out of home care and justice systems.
  - \$25 million to promote health and wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including access to culturally appropriate mental health and cancer treatment services.
- \$1.5 billion of existing targeted programs and services highlighted by:
  - \$375.5 million in Communities and Justice to fund early intervention programs, Aboriginal-led commissioning and child and family support programs.

- \$321.1 million in services to be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Orgs.

## Treaty

- \$5 million for a 12 month consultation process with Aboriginal communities in NSW to inform a pathway to treaty.

## Housing

- \$838,000 for new and upgraded quality homes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the Aboriginal Housing Office.

## Regional

- \$48,400 for Aboriginal cultural mentoring for disengaged youth in regional NSW.

## Education

### Construction of new schools

- \$9.8 billion for schools, TAFE and public preschools. This includes:
  - \$3.5 billion over 4 years for 24 new and 51 upgraded schools in Western Sydney. These include new high schools for Jordan Springs, Schofields/Tallawong, Gregory Hills/Gledswood Hills, Leppington/Denham Court and Melrose Park, and a new primary school for Sydney Olympic Park (Carter St precinct).

- \$1.4 billion over 4 years for 19 new and 51 upgraded schools in regional NSW. This includes new high schools at Medowie and Googong.

## TAFE

- \$112 million to meet the TAFE funding shortfall and to conduct a VET review.
- \$93.5 million for 1000 extra apprentices across the NSW government by 2026.
- Fee free vocational education places for training in in-demand skills and industries and fee concessions for Commonwealth welfare beneficiaries and people with a disability to undertake Certificate IV and below qualifications through the Smart and Skilled program

## Support for Students

- Addressing declining education outcomes Education Future Fund – made permanent and expanded to the following programs:
  - \$278.4 million for permanent literacy and numeracy tutoring programs across primary and secondary schools
  - 250 additional school counsellors
  - Doubling the School Breakfast 4 Health program to 1000 schools for \$8 million
  - Community Languages Schools Program at a cost of \$17.8 million

## Addressing the Teacher shortage

- Converting 10 000 teachers and 6000 admin staff to permanent position.

- \$1.4 billion to fund the teachers wage increases:
  - The starting salary for a NSW teacher will increase from \$75,791 to \$85,000 and the salary for a top of the scale teacher will increase from \$113,042 to \$122,100. All teachers will move to a new higher paying step.
  - School counsellors will be paid according to a new salary scale consisting of five annual steps, which recognises their dual qualification and acute staff shortages in their discipline.
- \$20 million boost to the Innovative Teacher Training Fund to attract the best teachers.

## Health and Wellbeing

### Access to health services

- \$13.8 billion under the Government's Essential Infrastructure Plan to develop new health facilities, including:
  - \$120 million to expand Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospitals,
  - \$350 million to expand Canterbury Hospital and upgrade existing infrastructure,
  - \$550 million for the expansion of Fairfield Hospital to deliver more beds and increase capacity of emergency and critical care services,
  - \$700 million for the Rouse Hill Hospital development,
  - \$1.3 billion to rebuild Bankstown Hospital on a new site.
- \$3.8 billion to support new and upgraded health facilities in regional communities, including:

- \$7.5 million for the Milton Ulladulla Hospital and upgrades to the Community Cancer Service Centre,
- \$200 million for the Bathurst Hospital Redevelopment,
- \$260 million for a new Eurobodalla Hospital,
- \$538 million for Albury Wodonga Regional Hospital,
- \$19 million to support free parking at regional and rural hospitals.
- \$100 million to support women’s healthcare, including \$52.7 million for 48 new Sexual Assault nurse examiners and medical and forensic officers for victims of sexual assault.

## Mental Health

- \$17.1 million to support Kids Helpline. This funding will be used to recruit more counsellors to provide additional counselling services, and increase the capacity of the Kids Helpline to ensure children and young people across the state have access to 24/7 services.
- \$669.8 million included in the Essential Infrastructure plan for the Statewide Mental Health infrastructure Program. The program includes addressing service requirement in state-wide services such as child and adolescent and older persons services, forensic services and facilities to support recovery and greater opportunity for people to transition or receive care in the community. The program will also improve the therapeutic environment of identified NSW Health facilities providing acute mental healthcare.
- \$20.0 million reserved in Restart NSW to deliver residential accommodation for those with long-standing mental health challenges, in partnership with The Haven Foundation.

- \$460 million for the construction of an Integrated Mental Health Complex at Westmead. The new Integrated Mental Health Complex will enable mental health services located at Cumberland Hospital West Campus to relocate to a new, purpose-built facility in the Westmead Health Precinct, connected to Westmead Hospital.

## Gambling reform

- \$100 million to support an expanded cashless gaming trial, the delivery of harm-minimisation programs, and gaming reform.

## Cost of Living

### Utilities relief

- National Energy Bill Relief provided through the Commonwealth Government to 1.6 million eligible families, pensioners, low income households, veterans, carers and self-funded retirees in NSW with a \$500 electricity rebate that will be automatically applied to bills in 23-24.
- Energy Accounts Payment Assistance – ongoing assistance for people experiencing difficulty paying their energy bill because of a short-term financial hardship, crisis or emergency.
- Expanding existing energy bill relief to 23-24:
  - Increasing the Family Energy Rebate to \$250
  - Increasing the Low-Income Household Rebate and Medical Energy Rebate to \$350

## Transport

- Toll relief: \$60 weekly toll cap for private motorists from 1 Jan 2024 – assisting more than 700 000 motorists - \$615 million.
- Continuing existing Toll Rebate Scheme providing 40% back to eligible drivers who spend more than \$402 on tolls in 2023-2024. Drivers can get back up to \$802.
- Daily, weekend and weekly Opal Card Travel Caps for adults, children, youths, and concession holders
- Concessional Driver Licence Renewal fees for eligible concession holders.
- School Student Transport Scheme: provides subsidised travel to and from school for eligible students on government and private bus, rail, and ferry services, long-distance coaches, and in private vehicles where no public transport services exist.
- Continued funding to provide 1000 free places for learner drivers from disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake the Safer Drivers Course.

## Health

- Aids and Equipment Program: Assisting eligible people in NSW who have specific, short-term, or ongoing health needs by providing them with appropriate assistive technology.
- Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme: Providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs when a patient needs to travel long distances for treatment that is not available locally.

## Education

- Ongoing funding for the Smart and Skilled Program which provides fee-free training for the formal training component of apprenticeships and traineeships, fee-free vocational education places for training in-demand skills and industries and fee concessions for Commonwealth welfare beneficiaries and people with a disability to undertake Certificate IV and below qualifications.
- Renewed funding for the Vocational Training Assistance Scheme travel and accommodation allowance for apprentices or new entrant trainees who are required to travel more than 120 km round trip to attend day or block-release training.

## Recreation

- A new means-tested \$50 Active and Creative Kids combined voucher issued twice per year beginning on 1 February 2024 to enable kids to participate in sports and creative programs.

# Housing and Homelessness

## Social and affordable housing and homelessness

- Homes NSW backed by the Essential Housing Package (\$224 million):
  - \$70 million debt financing to accelerate the delivery of social, affordable, and private homes primarily in regional NSW
  - \$35.3 million to continue to provide housing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families through Services Our Way
  - \$35 million to support critical maintenance for social housing.

- \$20 million reserved in Restart NSW for dedicated mental health housing
- \$15 million to establish a NSW Housing Fund for urgent priority housing and homelessness measures to confront the housing crisis
- \$11 million urgent funding injection to Temporary Accommodation in 23-24 to address rising homelessness.
- \$10.5 million urgent funding injection to the Community Housing Leasing Program
- \$10 million Modular Housing Trial to deliver faster quality social housing
- \$5.9 million urgent funding in 23-24 to allow SHS to addresses increasing demand
- Social Housing Accelerator program
  - \$610 million Commonwealth Social Housing Accelerator program for 1500 new social housing dwellings (NOT added to by the state government)
  - \$79.3 million of this has been allocated for Aboriginal Housing

## Boosting housing supply

- Reinvestment of \$300 million of dividends to Landcom to deliver 1409 affordable houses and 3288 market dwellings
- 3100 affordable housing dwellings by 2028-2029 as part of the National Housing Accord, 1800 dwellings will be supplied by Landcom.
- Landcom is also improving the supply of affordable housing in regional NSW – in the process of acquiring two regional sites for developing build-

to-rent housing in the South Coast and Northern Rivers Region – to deliver approx. 100 dwellings over the next 5 years. \$60 million

## Planning Reforms

- Faster Planning Program:
- \$24 million to establish a NSW Building Commission to support high quality housing and protect home buyers from substandard buildings
- \$9.1 million to assess housing supply opportunities across government-owned sites, including for the delivery of new social housing
- \$5.6 million for an AI pilot to deliver planning system efficiencies

## Support for Home Buyers

- \$691 million for the First home buyers Assistance Scheme – People buying their first home will save up to \$30 735 (stamp duty discount) – affecting 84% of first home buyers (for properties valued up to \$1 million
- \$10 000 First Home Owner Grant for eligible first home owners buying a newly built house, townhouse, apartment, unit or similar with a purchase price below \$600 000 or land and a new house with a total combined cost of below \$750 000
- \$13 million to expand access to the Shared Equity Home Buyer Helper trial to include domestic and family violence victim-survivors.

## Support for Renters

- While there appears to be limited identified supports for renters, the Government has introduced a NSW Rental Commissioner to be a voice

for renters and work with the government and stakeholders to move reforms for renters, including the following election promises:

- Implementing a portable rental bonds scheme
- Protecting renters from unfair evictions by legislating reasonable grounds for ending a lease
- Making it easier for renters to have pets in homes.
- \$60 million for a Build-to-rent trial in the South Coast and Northern Rivers for 100 dwellings, 20 of which will be affordable.
- Ongoing funding for existing private rental assistance through Rent Choice, Advance Rent, Bond Loan and other programs to help eligible persons, including those escaping domestic violence, setup and maintain a tenancy in the private rental market.

## Domestic and Family Violence

- \$6.6 million in 2023-2024 for specialist children and young people workers in 20 refuges.
- \$6.1 million to extend and expand the Womens Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service Hearing Support pilot.
- \$1.4 million to extend and expand the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service workers in police stations.
- \$4.2 million to increase the capacity of the NSW sexual violence helpline.
- \$4.3 million in 2023-24 to extend the service delivery of 12 community-based prevention, early-intervention and crisis projects.
- \$2.1 million over two years to fund a pilot program of Sexual Violence Liaison Officers in five police area commands to work with survivors of sexual violence.

- \$2 million to refurbish the Illawarra Women’s Trauma Recovery Centre.
- \$8.1 million to expand Redfern Legal Centre’s financial abuse service statewide – expanding their capacity from 300 clients per year to around 500 for free legal assistance, family law issues or money problems as a result of financial abuse.
- \$13 million to expand access to the Shared Equity Home Buyer Helper trial to include domestic and family violence victim-survivors.
- Continued provision of free ambulance services for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence or child abuse.
- Private Rental assistance through Rent Choice, Advance Rent, Bond Loan and other programs to help eligible persons, including those escaping domestic violence, set up and maintain a tenancy in the private rental market.
- \$4.4 million over three years, to establish a new specialist multicultural domestic and family violence centre in southwest Sydney which will be able to help over 4,000 refugee and migrant women a year access services that are culturally responsive. To ensure sustainable results, the centre will also work with multicultural communities on primary prevention.