

## 2018-19 – Victorian State Budget

### Something for nearly everyone, but fundamental challenges remain

The **2018-19 Victorian budget** delivered by Treasurer Tim Pallas on Tuesday 1 May 2018 provides something for nearly everyone: it focuses on training and skills development, further infrastructure investment at an unprecedented level, and some contribution to most areas of social need. Such largesse was enabled by continued strong growth in the economy and a massive 9% increase in budgeted revenue, largely from grants.

However, a fundamental challenge remains: it should be core business to address the needs of those on the margins; and, in the current political environment, political courage is needed to address the true causes of crime, rather than reacting to headlines with more investments in building prisons.

Some specific investments are very welcome:

- \$523.5 million (all expenditure measures are over four years) for training, higher education and workforce development, including free TAFE and pre-apprenticeship courses in priority employment areas
- \$128.9 million to increase the number of judges and magistrates to reduce delays for those attending court – a welcome response to the consequences of criminal justice measures in recent years that have increased the workload for courts. A strong connection to school, to family and community can keep children on the right path and out of trouble, so we welcome the \$44m investment to expand the Navigator program that focuses on this.
- While overall spending increases in child protection and family services are modest, welcome measures include \$140.6 million for children with complex needs.
- \$705 million in mental health and addiction services at the clinical end of the service spectrum.

But creating a fair, compassionate and just society needs further initiatives:

- Housing and homelessness have been a welcome focus, but adequate investment in public and social housing remains a huge gap in our social infrastructure: The [Council to Homeless Persons](#) propose an increase of 14,500 dwellings over the next five years to address current need.
- \$679m for a new adult prison at Lara is the largest budgetary provision in the criminal justice arena, but there is not commensurate expenditure to address the causes of rising demand. In fact, the budget papers indicate that in the current year recidivism will slip to 42% from an estimated 41% of people returning to jail within two years; and the lack of housing and employment opportunities for people leaving prison continue to contribute to this outcome.
- There are welcome measures to strengthen support for children in out-of-home-care, but some fundamental issues are yet to be addressed, including funding to enable young people to remain supported until 21 years old.

Understanding the State budget is a complex task. We welcome the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee [Report on the 2017-18 Budget Estimates](#) that recommends a regular review of departmental performance measures to ensure they are meaningful and adjusted to reflect changes in funding and performance. There is a long way to go!

[Click here](#) for a more detailed report.

#### Contact:

Denis Fitzgerald | Executive Director | Catholic Social Services Victoria  
[dfitzgerald@css.org.au](mailto:dfitzgerald@css.org.au), tel 0418 136 372