

Youth

This State Budget contains a couple of positive investments across the forward estimates aimed at addressing the issues facing young people, such as resourcing to implement the ICA Taskforce recommendations and in programs to support students with complex behaviour and/or disabilities.

However, this investment is minimal in comparison with the broader spending and fails to be coordinated under a coherent vision for youth service investment and governance in Western Australia. A strategic vision and policy for youth service investment is needed in order to see improved announcements in future State Budgets.

Initiative	Implementing the recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents (BP2, V2, P322)
Investment	\$35.5 million
Description	From 2023-24 a further \$35.5 million will be invested to progress the recommendations of the ICA Taskforce, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$7.5m for the establishment of a 2.5 year pilot of a Community ICA Mental Health Service Hub in Bunbury; • \$6.4m for the continuation of a 9.5 FTE uplift at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); • \$3.6m for the establishment of a 2.5 year pilot of an East Metropolitan Acute Care Response Team; • \$5.8m of funding for 10 additional Aboriginal Mental Health Workers; and • \$4.8m for an expansion to the Touchstone Service which provides specialised intensive treatment for children aged 12-17 years with complex personality disorders.
Implications	This is a positive start to addressing the significant gap in youth mental health services across the state, however the amount is spread thin across a range of initiatives, thereby reducing its impact. Improved resourcing is required to create sustainable long-term shifts in positive youth health and wellbeing.

Initiative	South-West End-to-End Young Driver Training Program (Media Statement - 'Big boost to keep our communities safe') (BP3, P123)
Investment	\$810,000 over four years
Description	This program works with disadvantaged young people in the South-West to help them learn to drive and get their license.
Implications	Whilst a small investment, this investment is important to bridging the gap for young people in regional areas to be able to get their

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	driver's licenses in the South West. Supporting regional young people to obtain drivers licences will assist them to access education, employment, and community connection.
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Initiative	Driving Access and Equity Program (BP2, V2, P572)
Investment	\$5.8 million
Description	This program to assist young people in the Kimberley to obtain a driver's license has been extended in 2023-24.
Implications	Whilst a small investment, this investment is important to bridging the gap for young people in regional areas to be able to get their driver's license in the Kimberley.

Initiative	Child Protection Services (BP3, P133)
Investment	\$123.8 million
Description	Increased investment for the child protection system and supporting services to protect vulnerable children, at-risk youth and their families, including \$11.7 million to extend the Target 120 program across all locations to 30 June 2025.
Implications	This investment is detailed in Budget Paper No.3 however there is little information on where this spending is allocated across the Child Protection System.

Initiative	Target 120 (BP3, P134)
Investment	\$11.7 million
Description	Target 120 is a program intended to work across local organisations and service providers, government agencies and the community to support young people and their families who are at risk of becoming repeat offenders by connecting them with tailored services and supports. This investment will extent all locations until 30 June 2025.
Implications	Target 120 has seen significant investment in recent years, but evaluation details have not been released. Early intervention with children and families is highly welcome, but evidence of effectiveness is needed to guide this program and ensure it is achieving results. It is our hope to see this program with promising results to hand over the reins to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in other T120 locations. Initiatives such as this must include housing for workers as part of the cost.

Initiative	Youth Support Grants (BP2, V2, P522)
Investment	\$2,600,000 over forward estimates (\$650,000 per year)
Description	A cross section of grants to support youth engagement, development and celebration that lead to positive impacts for young people.

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Implications	This funding is a continuation of 2022/23 and is resourcing small and innovative projects for young people throughout the community.
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Initiative	Provision of Menstrual Products in Public Secondary Schools (BP2, V1, P349)
Investment	\$5,236,000 over forward estimates.
Description	A state-wide initiative to supply free menstrual and sanitary products throughout public high schools to better support student engagement within education settings.
Implications	We strongly welcome this investment as a long overdue initiative to ensure equitable access to menstrual products in schools. We note spending changes in 2023-24, but it is unclear how much of this is new investment.

Initiative	National Student Wellbeing Program (BP2, V1, P349)
Investment	\$30,912,000 over forward estimates.
Description	The National Student Wellbeing Program (NSWP) supports students within schools with their wellbeing. The new NSWP provides funding for schools to choose a qualified student wellbeing officer or chaplain.
Implications	This funding shows promise but more detailed is required on the model of support provided and collaboration with youth workers is essential to providing effective support for young people. We note spending changes in 2023-24, but it is unclear how much of this is new investment.

Initiative	Suicide Prevention School Response (BP2, V1, P349)
Investment	\$560,000 in 2024/25
Description	The School Response aims to ensure that school aged youth experiencing issues associated with depression, self-harm and grief from bereavement by suicide have access to necessary services and support. It encompasses prevention, intervention and postvention activity in schools across Western Australia, including in metropolitan, regional and remote areas. This funding is a small spending change from last budget.
Implications	This investment will ensure increased mental health support for young people post-suicide and help to prevent further suicides however more detail is needed on how widespread implementation is.

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Initiative	Support for Students with Disability and Complex Behaviour (BP2, V1, P350)
Investment	\$533,800,000 over the forward estimates, which represents an increase of \$74,600,000 from 2022-23.
Description	An initiative that sees the WA government increase funding towards the expansion of specialist learning programs for students with autism spectrum disorder, and an increase to the educational adjustment allocation to support more students with undiagnosed disabilities and learning difficulties.
Implications	We welcome this announcement as a positive investment to improve support and outcomes for young people with complex needs and/or disabilities, however we hope there are options for integrative classes to prevent isolation. <i>See WACOSS 'Early Years' and 'Disability' fact sheets for further comment.</i>

Initiative	Adopting and Adapting the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 (BP2, V1, P349)
Investment	\$24,300,000 million
Description	An ongoing project that ensures The School Curriculum and Standards Authority is being adopted and adapting to the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 for implementation by all Western Australian schools, which includes the provision of teacher support resources.
Implications	More detail is required to see whether this curriculum is suited to meet the needs of young people. We note spending changes in 2023-24, but it is unclear how much of this is new investment.