

Children and Families

There were comparatively few major announcements in the children and family service area, outside of the cost of living measures for families and school students (see *Cost of Living fact sheet*), some new or extended initiatives in child protection (listed below) and major additional funding for Child Development Services (see *Health fact sheet*, also listed below).

Additional funding for Home Stretch WA converts the existing pilot into an ongoing program and extends it to include eight Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as well as three mainstream services, extending its regional coverage.

Initiative	Extending Home Stretch WA funding for young people leaving out-of-home care (BP2, V2, P504)
Investment	\$46.3 million in total (\$11.7 million/year ongoing)
Description	Additional funding builds on the \$32.7 million invested in 2019 in the Home Stretch pilot, making the program permanent. It supports young people from 18 to 21 as they leave care.
Implications	Now a total of 9 ACCO services and 3 mainstream services will deliver the program across the state – adding in the Goldfields-Esperance and Wheatbelt regions. (<i>Anglicare and Yorganup played a critical role developing the service model</i>) (see media release).

Initiative	Continuing and expanding foster care supports (BP2, V2, P504)
Investment	\$17 million in total (\$4 million/year rising to \$4.4 million by 2027-28)
Description	Supporting the continuation and expansion of foster care supports across the state.
Implications	Average cost \$216/day per child for 4,314 foster care arrangements (see media release).

Initiative	Upgrade to residential care homes for children in out-of-home care (BP2, V2, P521)
Investment	\$13.7 million over two years
Description	One-off funding allocated for upgrade works to care homes
Implications	(none)

Initiative	Expansion of Child Development Services (BP2, V1, P306, P310)
Investment	\$39 million in total (\$15.7 million in 2024-25, \$23 million in 2025-26)
Description	Additional funding for both the Child and Adolescent Health Service metropolitan service (CAHS-CDS) and WA Country Health Service regional service (WACHS-CDS). Enables a significant increase in clinical staff, including paediatricians, clinical nurse specialists, speech

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	pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and audiologists, in both the metro and regional areas.
Implications	Referrals to child development paediatricians have risen 132% over last decade leading to significant delays in diagnosis and treatment of children with developmental delays. This solution still only focuses on the health system response and it is unclear if this will also address the problem of needing a formal diagnosis before receiving critical early development advice and support. Opportunity remains to better engage and link frontline child and family services to provide early identification of risk to prioritise referrals and provide earlier intervention (see media release , also see Health fact sheet).

Initiative	Health Navigator Pilot extension (for children in out-of-home care) (BP2, V1, P306, P310)
Investment	\$6.6 million over two years
Description	Continues the successful Health Navigator pilot program by helping vulnerable, out-of-home-care children and young people to get the best start in life.
Implications	Skilled health system navigators partner with carers, case workers and young adults to access comprehensive health assessments through collaborative cross-agency service delivery that maximises health and wellbeing benefits within a culturally safe environment (see Health fact sheet).

Initiative	Aboriginal Representative Organisations pilot (BP2, V2, P504)
Investment	\$2.8 million in total (\$940,000 in 2024-25, \$1.9 million in 2025-26)
Description	Additional funding to continue the ARO pilot program commenced in 2022-23 with initial funding of \$1.49 million.
Implications	The <i>Children and Community Services Amendment Act (2021)</i> requires AROs be consulted about placement arrangements and cultural support planning for Aboriginal children in or entering the care of the CEO. This implements the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle moving towards Aboriginal family-led decision-making processes that promote cultural safety.

Initiative	Child Safeguarding Implementation unit (DLGSC) (BP2, V2, P532)
Investment	\$5.4 million over four years
Description	Funds a unit in Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries providing capacity building, training and advice to assist local governments, sports and recreation sectors to implement child safe practices and policies.
Implications	Builds on \$715 million spent in 2023-24. (Would be good to see similar funding and support in other sectors)

Initiative	Early Years Partnership (BP2, V2, P116, P503)
Investment	\$15.6 million over four years
Description	The Early Years Partnership focuses on child wellbeing and school readiness, where community plans are codesigned with local communities in four locations - Armadale West, Central Great Southern, Derby and Bidyadanga. EYP is a whole-of-government 10-year partnership (2018-2028) between Minderoo Foundation, Telethon Kids Institute and Dept Communities.
Implications	EYP aims to increase child well-being and school readiness by improving access to early learning opportunities, early identification and intervention services to address developmental delay and family support services.

Initiative	Infants, Children and Adolescents (ICA) Taskforce (BP2 V1, P331 – P333)
Investment	\$46,600,000 over four years, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$22.4 million over four years to establish new Acute Care Response Teams in the North and South Metropolitan areas and the Great Southern, and to extend the existing Acute Care Response Team pilot in the East Metropolitan area. • \$19.5 million to extend the expansion of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services' Crisis Connect service workforce • \$4.7 million for a two-year extension of the WA Country Health Service's Brief Crisis Intervention Service to continue a vital post-emergency department follow-up service for children and their families and allow for a full evaluation of the service to be undertaken.
Description	The Government is continuing its commitment to implement all 32 recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents aged 0-18 years in Western Australia (ICA Taskforce). Investment in the 2024/25 Budget brings the Government's total investment in ICA Taskforce initiatives to \$143.6 million. (See also Youth and Child and Family fact sheets)
Implications	This initiative will improve access to vital services for young people needing an acute response. Ongoing investment in WACHS Brief Crisis Intervention allows for the continuation of a vital post-emergency department follow-up service for

	children and their families and allows for a full evaluation of the service to be undertaken. Yet, a two-year extension represents an overall shortfall for mental health funding in the regions.
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Initiative	Reconfiguration and refurbishment of the PCH Mental Health inpatient ward (BP2, V1, P312, P332).
Investment	\$14.2 million over an unknown period
Description	Additional funding for the reconfiguration and refurbishment of the Perth Children's Hospital Mental Health Inpatient Unit on Ward 5A. The Government is continuing its commitment to implement all 32 recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents aged 0-18 years in Western Australia (ICA Taskforce). Investment in the 2024/25 Budget brings the Government's total investment in ICA Taskforce initiatives to \$143.6 million.
Implications	Important infrastructure upgrades to improve services for children receiving inpatient mental health support.