

# QUEENSLAND BUDGET ANALYSIS 2024-2025

The 2024-25 State Budget is delivered against a stark contrast. While many Queenslanders are struggling with the cost of living, the state's economy has been touted as the strongest in the nation.

The state's economic prosperity presents a golden opportunity for government to make investments that will take the pressure off Queenslanders in the short term and provide better supports in the long term.

This budget has been described as a cost-of-living budget. For a defined period, it delivers significant energy bill relief, cheaper public transport, assistance to pay for sporting activities for children and discounts on government fees and charges. Importantly food relief has also been prioritised. Investments outlined in this year's budget will help ensure school children are fed and emergency food relief services have more resources.

Supporting the financial sustainability of the community services sector is also an important cost of living measure. We welcome the Queensland Government's commitment to new best practice conditions for the community services sector. The implementation of these conditions will enable the community sector to provide more support for people when they're vulnerable. In addition to these systemic reforms, this budget includes a modest increase in the indexation of community services funding and includes funding increases for disability advocacy, community legal centres, gambling help, refugee support services and the Queensland Financial Resilience Program. However, further investment is required to ensure we have sufficient financial counsellors to meet the growing need for this support in Queensland.

Amid an unabating housing crisis, investment in this state budget includes significant additional funding to support implementation of key initiatives in the comprehensive long-term Homes for Queenslanders plan. While more investment is needed in the longer term to deliver on a social housing target of 53,500 new dwellings by 2046, it is expected that Commonwealth Government social housing funding will support the realisation of short-term targets and it is positive that a significant proportion of capital funding has been allocated to fund new social housing and renewals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

While increases in rent continue to outstrip the Consumer Price Index, and 300,000 Queenslanders have unmet housing need, this budget has not delivered measures that will substantially benefit the third of Queenslanders who rent.

Additional support for families with children is critical, particularly during a dual cost-of-living and housing crisis. Funding to enhance access to health services, allied health professionals and to sustain housing is welcome. However, it is disappointing that a link has not been drawn clearly enough between the need to support vulnerable families with children and addressing issues connected to the youth justice system. While we enthusiastically welcome the expansion of the QATSICPP remit, to include providing peak representation for youth justice services, we are disappointed by the continued investment in detention centres and punitive responses to youth crime. This investment would deliver greater outcomes if it was directed to services.

This budget also includes a significant focus on the needs of victims of crime. This focus must be expanded to ensure our system can respond to all women, children and men experiencing domestic and family violence. A 20 per cent uplift in funding for domestic and family violence services is welcome. However, while one in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous partner since the age of 15, and one woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days, clearly much more is urgently needed.<sup>1</sup>

Equality is central to the vision of the community services sector and over many years we have advocated for measures that would improve the economic security of women in Queensland. It is positive to see the continued implementation of gender responsive budgeting practices and to observe the gender pay gap decreasing. However, women in Queensland still have lower levels of participation in the workforce, lower superannuation balances and higher levels of underemployment, despite larger numbers of women completing tertiary education.<sup>2</sup> It is vitally important for the Queensland Government to continue building momentum to address persisting gender inequity.

<sup>1</sup> State of Queensland. (2024). *Domestic and Family Violence Training and change Management Framework*. Department of Justice and Attorney-General, p 2.

<https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/dfv-training-change-framework/resource/5b008641-88fc-4f17-af46-585fdfeb0f67>

<sup>2</sup> State of Queensland. *Women's Budget Statement, Queensland Budget 2024-25*. Queensland Treasury.

[https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget\\_2024-25\\_Womens\\_Budget\\_Statement.pdf](https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget_2024-25_Womens_Budget_Statement.pdf)

# IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

## Significant new initiatives

- An increase of NGO indexation from 3.75 per cent to 3.94 per cent in 2024-25 representing an additional \$5.05 million for the sector in 2024-25 and \$21.4 million to 2026-27
- Increased funding of \$9.9 million over five years and \$1.1 million per annum ongoing for disability advocacy
- Additional funding of \$7.5 million over two years to continue disability supports for children with autism in Queensland
- Increased funding of \$22.6 million in 2024-25 for Community Legal Centres (\$12.4 million) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (\$10.2 million)
- Additional funding of \$8.1 million in 2024-25 to double funding for the Gambling Help Service System
- Increased funding of \$5.8 million over two years to expand support under the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance Program (\$4.8 million) and broaden engagement with children through the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (\$1 million)
- Increased funding of \$10 million in 2024-25 to provide a temporary uplift to the Queensland Community Support Scheme
- Increased funding of \$2.8 million over two years to continue the Queensland Financial Resilience Program

## Our analysis

For many years, QCOSS member organisations have been advocating to improve government procurement processes that impact service delivery. The QCOSS pre-budget submission: 'Strengthen the sustainability of the sector' outlined a range of measures to achieve this. In response, the Queensland Government has announced 'Best Practice Industry Conditions for Social Services Procurement', which will include service agreements with default five-year initial terms. This is a significant win for the sector. With longer-term contracts organisations will be able to stabilise their workforces, implement longer-term plans and achieve better outcomes.

Under the new conditions, permanent employment for workers will be prioritised, with sufficient funding and contractual flexibility to ensure workers are paid entitlements (including redundancies). The conditions also stipulate that, where contractual requirements are being met, six months' notice (in writing) will be provided before agreements cease, are not renewed or are substantially reduced. For service agreements

being renewed, contracts will be offered more than three months before the previous end date.

Workforce professional development is also a critical factor that impacts service sustainability. A key principle of 'Best Practice Industry Conditions for Social Services Procurement' will be sufficient funding for suitable levels of training and support supervision. Additionally, the Queensland Government is providing a funding boost of \$203.1 million over two years for the Queensland Skills Strategy 2024-2028, as part of a total investment of \$370 million. The Queensland Skills Strategy aims to further strengthen the state's training system to deliver skills needed to provide access to good jobs with better pay for Queenslanders. While it is unclear how much of this funding will be directed towards the community services sector, under Queensland Workforce Strategy's first Action Plan, sector-led initiatives are underway for worker development, attraction and retention in the health and communities' industries.

Queensland's community services sector is part of the largest employer group in Queensland, so it is vital the Queensland Government work collaboratively with the community sector to address the challenges associated with recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce.

The NGO indexation rate for 2024-25 was initially 3.75 per cent (as per the 2023-24 budget update). Due to increased service delivery costs, QCOSS member organisations raised concerns that this rate of indexation would place community service organisations under continued financial stress. The Queensland Government has recognised this and increased NGO indexation for 2024-25 to 3.94 per cent.

To formalise the 'Best Practice Industry Conditions for Social Services Procurement', Queensland Government agencies will work with the sector via the Social Services Category Council Industry Reference Group. This will include developing guidelines, policies and procedures to support the initial and ongoing implementation of these principles over time. QCOSS welcomes these conditions and will be seeking a rapid implementation of these principles to support a more stabilised workforce and improve the sustainability of the service system.

Lastly, many of the budget's substantial funding initiatives will inject funding into community service organisations that will help improve the sustainability of services. QCOSS welcomes the funding boost for Community Legal Centres and for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. With Queenslanders experiencing significant cost-of-living pressures, access to free legal assistance is critical now more than ever.

# END QUEENSLAND'S HOUSING CRISIS

## Significant new initiatives

- \$1.688 billion over five years and \$130.4 million per annum ongoing towards funding housing and homelessness services and response initiatives outlined in the new Homes for Queenslanders Plan. This increases the total funding package for housing and homelessness services in the Homes for Queenslanders Plan to \$3.1 billion over five years
- \$1.366 billion over four years has also been allocated to capital funding for new social housing and the social housing capital program
- \$23.2 million for emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness (Immediate Housing Response for Families funding allocated to the 2023-24 year only)
- \$16.5 million to investigate delivery of social and affordable housing through public-private partnerships through a pilot of Ground Lease Delivery Models (this is part of the total Homes for Queenslanders Plan \$3.1 billion funding package)
- \$11 million over three years to support the construction industry workforce to increase apprentices and skilled workers available to contribute to building new housing
- \$9.9 million over two years for the extension of existing headleases in the Help to Home and Helping Hand Headlease Programs
- \$2.5 million in 2024-25 to undertake planning to support the Waraba Priority Development Area declaration (this is part of the total Homes for Queenslanders Plan \$3.1 billion funding package)
- \$1.3 million over two years for focused housing and tenancy sustainment support for participants of the Court Link Program (this is part of the \$1.28 billion Community Safety Plan for Queensland)
- \$1.1 million in 2023-24 to identify and bring forward a development facilitation strategy to establish medium scale, mixed use tenure housing projects in key growth areas to support infill development/gentle density via land consolidation, planning and infrastructure (this is part of the total Homes for Queenslanders Plan \$3.1 billion funding package)
- \$916,000 over five years and \$223,000 per annum ongoing to implement integrated pathways from institutional settings into sustainable community housing (this is part of the total Homes for Queenslanders Plan \$3.1 billion funding package).
- \$600,000 in 2024-25 to support improved housing outcomes for people with disability experiencing domestic and family violence in Queensland (this is part of the total Homes for Queenslanders Plan \$3.1 billion funding package)
- \$8.2 million over three years to implement the Shaping SEQ 2023 Update, including the delivery of a dedicated Project Management Office
- \$12.1 million over five years to implement Stage 2 rental law reforms (funding for the department)
- \$6.4 million over four years to implement Stage 2 rental law reforms (funding for the Residential Tenancies Authority)

## Our analysis

The 2024–25 budget includes significant additional funding for key long-term initiatives outlined in the Homes for Queenslanders plan (released by the Queensland Government in February 2024).

Critically, additional capital funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works will substantially increase the supply of social housing dwellings in Queensland. \$1.366 billion over four years has been allocated towards social housing builds, to help meet the target of 53,500 new social dwellings by 2046 (on average more than 2,000 new social housing dwellings per year). This is the first time since 1945 that any Australian or state government has included evidenced-based targets in a housing plan designed to meet the predicted future demand for social housing.<sup>3</sup>

The need for these ambitious, evidence-based targets is highlighted by the failure to meet target service standards to access social housing. The “average wait time to allocation for assistance (months) with government-owned and managed social rental housing for clients in very high or high need” increased from 19 months in 2022–23 to 21.7 months in 2023–24. This remains well above the target service standard of 12 months, meaning clients with high and very high needs are waiting almost double the target service standard to access assistance. The long wait period also highlights the continuing pressure on services and the social housing system in Queensland.

Although current Queensland Government funding will not be sufficient to deliver all the social housing dwellings needed to meet the social housing target and reduce wait times, when combined with expected Commonwealth Government social housing funding, it will significantly contribute towards the target.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a significant proportion of funding has been specifically allocated to new social housing and renewals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The budget also includes positive funding measures that have the potential to further increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the housing system, including measures to pilot Ground Lease Delivery Models, extension of the existing headleases in the Help to Home and Helping Hand Headlease Programs, and funding to identify and bring forward infill development opportunities.

Additional funding of \$1.688 billion over five years for housing and homelessness support—including a 20 per cent increase in funding for specialist homelessness services pending the outcome of the independent review—is welcomed. This critical funding will enable services to provide essential support for people and families to meet the ongoing high and increasing demand for housing and homelessness support services in Queensland.

<sup>3</sup> Pawson H, Clarke A, van den Nouweland R, Petersen, H, Moore J, and Sigler, T. 2024. Breaking Ground Report: Progress update and assessment of Queensland’s Housing Crisis. Queensland Council of Social Service. 12 June 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.65

Of significance, is the omission of permanent supportive housing funding from the budget. Community service providers have identified funding for permanent supportive housing as a critical gap in the current housing system as for many of the people our members work with, availability and affordability of housing alone will not solve homelessness.<sup>5</sup> People with multiple and high support needs often require improved permanent access to healthcare, cultural connection, daily living support, and community services to sustain their wellbeing and housing. Permanent supportive housing is a proven solution for ending chronic homelessness by providing dignified and quality housing and support services for people with complex and high support needs.<sup>6,7</sup> Funding must be allocated to establish a permanent supportive housing framework, and to ensure that 10 per cent of all new social housing be developed as permanent supportive housing using a housing first approach for people with high support needs.

Other key gaps include the lack of specific funding measures for specialised forms of housing and homelessness support outlined in the Homes for Queenslanders Plan, including youth foyers and youth services, domestic and family violence shelters, specialist homelessness accommodation, crisis housing support for families, support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, the renters support package, and support for regional areas. It appears funding for these initiatives has been allocated within the substantial Homes for Queenslanders expenses (\$1.688 billion over five years) and capital measures (\$1.366 billion over four years). Therefore, the amount of funding allocated to

specific housing and service initiatives is unclear and requires further clarification. The absence of detail is particularly concerning in relation to the following two initiatives:

- the recently completed Our Place: A First Nations Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2024–2027. It is unclear if new expense funding has been allocated to support implementation following the completion of the plan in early 2024
- the Immediate Housing Response Funding for Families (and Individual) is not identified as a separate funding measure after 2023–24, therefore the funding allocation for this support is unclear beyond 2023–24.

A further gap in both policy and funding are the limitations of the Stage 2 Rental Reforms. QCOS supports the Stage 2 Rental Reforms as they include initiatives to make the private rental system fairer for renters. However, they fall short of implementing important reforms to provide a more affordable and secure rental system. Future rental reforms must include: measures to limit rent increases by an amount calculated in reference to the Consumer Price Index, an end to ‘without grounds’ evictions (including no grounds evictions at the end of a fixed term agreement), and an implementation of energy efficiency standards for rental properties.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Padgett, D., Henwood, B. F., & Tsemberis, S. J. (2016). *Housing First: Ending homelessness, transforming systems, and changing lives*. Oxford University Press, USA

<sup>7</sup> Roggenbuck, C. (2022) *Housing First: An evidence review of implementation, effectiveness and outcomes*, report prepared by AHURI, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne.



# REDUCE THE COST OF LIVING

## Significant new initiatives

- \$2.965 billion towards electricity bill support. Queensland households will automatically receive \$1,300 off their electricity bills in 2024–25. This consists of an upfront \$1,000 Cost of Living Rebate from the Queensland Government and a \$300 rebate paid in quarterly instalments from the Australian Government. Vulnerable households will continue to receive the \$372 Queensland Electricity Rebate for a total of \$1,672 support in 2024–25. Measures to progress targets and commitments within the Energy and Jobs Plan include an additional \$26 billion over the next four years.
- An estimated \$435 million over two years towards motor vehicle registration reduction (including \$399 million in 2024–25). A 20 per cent reduction in the registration fee and traffic improvement fee components of motor vehicle registration will be applied for all light vehicles, including motorcycles and trailers, for 12 months for renewal notices sent to customers from 5 August 2024. A saving of almost \$85 for a four-cylinder private use vehicle for 12 months, reducing the registration fee amount to approximately \$338.75 (excluding CTP) and the discount is estimated to benefit around 5.7 million Queenslanders.
- \$150 million over 6 months towards public transport fares (a flat fare of 50 cents per trip on public transport across Queensland plus half-price tickets on Airtrain services)
- \$33.5 million in 2024–25 towards Fairplay Vouchers for children and young people aged between 5 and 17 years to participate in sport and active recreation activities
- \$15 million in 2024–25 for the School and Community Food Relief Program
- An additional \$3.3 million over two years from 2024–25 for OzHarvest and SecondBite and \$2.9 million over four years for Foodbank QLD
- An additional \$1.7 million in emergency relief funding in 2024–25, with additional locations through 92 Neighbourhood Centres and into discrete First Nations communities
- An additional \$1.2 million over four years to Queensland Meals on Wheels (double current funding) to extend and increase funding to \$300,000 per annum
- An additional \$1.1 million in 2024–25 to Queensland Financial Resilience Program

## Our analysis

A total of \$11.218 billion in subsidies and concessions—an increase of 31.1 per cent from the previous budget and the highest increase on record—will be delivered in 2024–25, building on the program of existing concessions and subsidies. This includes \$3.739 billion in new and expanded measures in 2024–25 intended to provide cost-of-living relief.

While we welcome the intent of the recent budget measures in delivering relief in an inflationary environment, QCOSS highlights the need for a more equitable approach to cost-of-living relief. In 2023–24, all Queenslanders received \$550 while vulnerable households received \$700 in addition to the \$372 Electricity Rebate. In 2024–25, the \$1,000 cost of living rebate from the Queensland Government will go to all households



Investment is required to support more targeted interventions to be delivered to households most in need. Targeting relief towards vulnerable households and people on low incomes has the potential to maximise the value of impact as income levels are not evenly distributed within the community. According to the latest available data, the highest 10 per cent of households ranked by income had an average after-tax income of \$5,200 per week, over two-and-a-half times the income of the middle 20 per cent (\$2,000) and seven times that of the lowest 20 per cent (\$800).<sup>8</sup>

Against a cost-of-living crisis, the role of community organisations in providing targeted assistance to those seeking support is critical. We commend the increase of emergency relief funding and expansion to additional locations. We welcome the increased investment for food relief providers, noting the need for supporting agencies to coordinate and deliver a food system that is inclusive and trauma informed. QCOS members have regularly highlighted an increasing demand for food relief, as a greater number of Queenslanders are experiencing food insecurity.

We support temporary measures to provide relief for motor vehicle owners and public transport commuters and encourage continuation of these subsidies beyond their current time limitations.

A major gap in the budget is the lack of funding for sorely needed financial counsellors; for example, there are only two exclusive domestic and family violence specialised financial counsellors in Queensland, and they are federally funded.<sup>9</sup> Queensland has the lowest per capita funding for financial counselling, despite the crucial role financial counsellors play in assisting individuals with debt management, consumer rights, and navigating financial crises such as mortgage stress.

The budget papers estimate that revenue from fines is expected to total \$741 million in 2023-24. This is \$73 million lower than expected at the time of the 2023-24 budget. However, it is expected to grow by 7.2 per cent, to \$794 million, in 2024-25 because of an expansion of the Camera Detected Offence Program. These fines disproportionately impact low-income households and increase household debt.

<sup>8</sup> Davidson P, Bradbury B, Wong M (2024), Inequality in Australia 2024: Who is affected and how. [https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Inequality-Report-2024\\_who-is-affected-and-how.pdf](https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Inequality-Report-2024_who-is-affected-and-how.pdf). Australian Council of Social Service and UNSW.

<sup>9</sup> Financial Counselling Association of Queensland (2024), Give Financial Counselling in Queensland A Fair Go. FCAQ. James Hall (2024) [Struggling Queenslanders turned away by financial counsellors](https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/struggling-queenslanders-turned-away-by-financial-counsellors/news-story/ce477acb24a18e59c184b35e139884f8). Courier Mail. Accessed 12/6/24. <https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/struggling-queenslanders-turned-away-by-financial-counsellors/news-story/ce477acb24a18e59c184b35e139884f8>

# GIVE ALL CHILDREN A GOOD START

## Significant new initiatives

- \$502 million (\$299 million in redirected funding and \$203 million in additional funding) for the Putting Queensland Kids First Plan including:
  - \$71.4 million to enhance child health services and development checks
  - \$67.3 million for Behaviour Specialists
  - \$65.5 million for Sustained Health Home Visiting
  - \$56.5 million to enhance child development services in priority locations
  - \$42.6 million for Family Support Coordinators
  - \$29.8 million for Early Childhood Coordinators
  - \$26.2 million for extended free kindergarten for four-year-olds
  - \$11.6 million for Supported Tenancies
  - \$10.7 million for Health Practitioners in Primary Schools
  - \$10.4 million to support parents with mental health challenges
- \$1 billion over five years as additional investment in the State Education System including the Equity and Excellence Strategy
- \$500 million over four years for the Sustainable Investment in Schools including \$334 million in capital measures and \$166 million in expense measures
- \$288.2 million over five years and \$49.4 million per annum ongoing for the Preventing Youth Justice Involvement Through Educational Engagement including four additional Queensland Pathways State College campuses
- \$190.8 million over four years and \$52.5 million per annum ongoing to fund carer allowances for foster and kinship carers based on Child Strengths and Needs Assessments
- \$212.3 million in 2024-25 for out-of-home care services in response to ongoing pressures in the child protection system
- \$27.7 million over four years and \$7.3 million per annum ongoing to support the Unify program integrated case and client management system for children in contact with the child protection and youth justice systems
- \$7.3 million over four years and \$2 million in ongoing funding for the Supporting Families, Changing Futures (ICT Digital Applications)
- \$101.2 million over four years for the Playground and Tuckshops Program
- \$15 million in 2024-25 for the School Lunch Food Programs
- \$3.3 million in 2024-25 to enhance regulation in early childhood education and care services
- \$4.9 million over two years for the Homework Centre Programs providing onsite support for students to complete homework outside of school hours
- \$5.9 million in 2024-25 to support the Office of the Public Guardian secure the protection of vulnerable Queensland children and adults with impaired decision-making capacity
- \$12 million over four years for the Queensland Police Service to deliver the Bullyproof Australia in schools
- \$7.5 million over two years to continue disability supports for children with Autism to the AEIOU Foundation and Autism Queensland

## Our analysis

This budget delivers significantly increased investments in education with a focus on strengthening engagement with schools including workforce sustainability, infrastructure, and specialist supports. Under the *Putting Queensland Kids First Plan* there are a broad range of initiatives to provide multidisciplinary allied health supports that will need to be coordinated effectively across government and community-based providers to determine and respond to the needs of children as early as possible in their development. This plan requires a robust evaluation framework to ensure that the investments support all children in Queensland.

QCROSS welcomes the investments in school engagement supports, including the development of Pathways State College Campuses, programs to prevent interactions with the youth justice system, and improved mainstream facilities to support children to remain connected to the education system as a key indicator of future wellbeing.

Increased investment in free kindergarten for four-year olds is welcome. However, the Queensland Government should increase accessibility to high quality early childhood education and care by extending access to all three-year olds, bringing Queensland in line with best practice in Australia and overseas. Further support is also required to grow community-controlled early childhood services.

The significant investments in carer allowances will support foster and kinship carers to provide the essentials to children in out of home care and the associated Child Strengths and Needs Assessments should be clearly implemented with additional resources targeting families with barriers to access assessments. The additional boost for out of home care services is also welcomed, however the single financial year investment must be closely evaluated to determine the need for ongoing funding to support children in care.

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# INVEST IN QUEENSLAND'S YOUTH SERVICES

## Significant new initiatives

- \$1.28 billion including to fund the Community Safety Plan for Queensland including:
  - \$149.2 million over three years to fund the Wacol Youth Remand Centre across multiple government departments
  - \$261.4 million over four years and \$89.2 million per annum ongoing to fund the Woodford Youth Detention Centre across multiple government departments
  - A further \$17.7 million over two years has been allocated to Youth Detention Centre Readiness and Interim Arrangements to continue current services for young people in watchhouses while detention centres are built
  - \$39 million over two years from 2024-25 under the Strengthening and Sustaining Court Reforms Tackling Youth and Adult Crime initiative including the Court Link Program and Townsville Youth Court
  - \$13.6 million over two years for the expansion of the Youth Co-Responder Teams
  - \$7 million in 2024-25 for the expansion of the youth electronic monitoring program (with additional funds of \$3 million and \$4 million held centrally) across multiple government departments
  - \$7.1 million for a two-year expansion of mental and physical health services in Brisbane and Townsville Youth Detention Centres
  - \$6 million over two years to enhance Youth After Hours Services in high needs communities
  - \$5.7 million over two years to design, implement and procure a family reunification pilot service targeted at children aged 12 to 15 years
  - \$3.5 million over two years to expand the Intensive Case Management program for young people and families across seven locations
  - \$4.1 million over four years and \$1.1 million per annum ongoing to establish the New Childrens Court for Mount Isa (including \$2.4 million for Legal Aid Queensland and \$1.651 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services).
  - \$1.5 million in 2024-25 to support the Queensland Family and Child Commission's First Nations focused work, including continuation of the Young, Black and Proud scholarship program
  - \$5 million over two years to expand restorative justice services
  - \$2.1 million over two years to pilot the Gangs Exit Program
  - \$15 million in 2024-25 to construct a new Caloundra PCYC
  - \$2 million in 2024-25 to revitalise the Redcliffe PCYC
  - \$2.6 million over two years to support the African Youth Support Council's African Villages in Moorooka, Geebung and Redbank Plains
  - \$900,000 in 2024-25 Expansion of Metal Detection Program

- \$50.8 million over four years and \$15.8 million per annum ongoing for frontline support in Youth Detention Centres
- \$24.8 million over five years and \$5.2 million per annum ongoing to permanently establish the Justice Reform Office and support the functions of the Independent Ministerial Advisory Council
- \$9.8 million over five years and \$1.1 million ongoing (with up to \$15 million held centrally over two years with additional undisclosed funds) for the Integrated Strategy Addressing Youth Crime in North Queensland to increase the Queensland Police Service POLAIR capability
- \$6.3 million over five years, held centrally, to expand the Queensland Police Service Project Booyah early intervention program
- \$3.3 million over four years to extend the Cultural Family Partnership trial in three locations
- \$8.8 million over four years to establish a trial of a program response to serious violent youth offending in two locations, including program support and evaluation
- \$1.6 million over four years and \$206,000 per annum ongoing to the Queensland Family and Child Commission to support the Child Death Review Board
- \$24 million over 2 years (held centrally) for targeted responses to emerging youth crime including the expansion of the On Country Program.

## Our analysis

The 2024-25 budget includes \$1.28 billion to deliver the Community Safety Plan for Queensland. QCOSS welcomes increased investment in community-based programs that work directly with families to address the root causes of youth crime such as the Youth After Hours service and expanded On Country Program.

Almost one third of the funding has been allocated to the establishment, operation, and maintenance of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre and the Woodford Youth Detention Centre, with a further undisclosed investment to construct a 40 bed Cairns Youth Detention Centre. A further \$17.7 million has been allocated as interim arrangements to keep children in harmful adult watchhouses while more detention centres are being built. These costly policies will entrench Queensland as the state that incarcerates the most children in Australia. The budget has no

additional funding allocated beyond the 2026-27 financial year for these facilities, and it is expected that the ongoing costs of these centres will be significantly higher than the investment in community-based programs that reduce reoffending rates.

This budget has missed the opportunity to divert the substantial costs of detention facilities into community led, preventative, and diversionary programs that support the wellbeing of children and families. Community service funding for youth services pales in comparison to the money spent on government staffing, infrastructure, and equipment such as the electronic monitoring programs. This approach will mean that Queensland continues on a path towards arresting and imprisoning more children rather than addressing the root causes of crime

The Service Delivery Statement shows that the proportion of children who have contact with the Department of Youth Justice has reduced below forecast targets, yet the daily rate of children in detention is above department set targets, reinforcing the reality that to achieve safe communities, we need significant investment in community based, therapeutic programs rather than building more expensive jail cells. Furthermore, the proportion of young people declared as Serious Repeat Offenders is 1.5 per cent, well below the expected forecast of 5 per cent, reinforcing the unnecessary and harmful focus on youth crime in the public discourse.

QCOSS applauds the announcement of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) as the new peak body for youth justice services. This is a step in the right direction to amplify the voices of First Nations communities. Further investment into community-controlled organisations is needed to

empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led initiatives that support the wellbeing of children and families. QCOSS will strongly advocate for greater investment in these services in the 2025-26 budget.

A range of investments supporting victims of crime have received close to \$300 million across initiatives delivered by Victims Assist Queensland, Queensland Police Service, the Office of the Victims Commissioner, the Sexual Violence Case Review Board, and Restorative Justice Services. With such a significant focus on the needs of victims, this is an opportunity for the Queensland Government to invest in early intervention programs for children that are at risk of engaging with the Youth Justice system with the majority of young people currently in this system impacted by domestic and family violence (DFV). This also highlights the need for additional funding for frontline DFV services to ensure services are able to meet demand and respond effectively.



# ADVANCE WOMEN'S EQUALITY

## Significant new initiatives

- \$247.9 million over five years to drive women's health reform through the Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2032 (QWGHS). This sits alongside existing funding for women's health services and is partially funded by the phenomenal \$4.393 billion Queensland Health Growth Funding Uplift. Initiatives specifically related to the QWGHS will be delivered in line with system reform goals and the six priority action areas: 'healthy lifestyles and bodies', 'maternal health', 'health response to domestic and family violence, and sexual violence', 'sexual and reproductive health', 'mental health and wellbeing', and 'chronic health conditions and cancer'. Examples of just some of the funding initiatives to support women and girls' health needs include:
  - \$41.8 million to deliver the Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan 2032
  - \$56 million over four years to ensure that victim-survivors of sexual assault have access to timely and high-quality forensic examination services
  - \$5 million over four years to commence the staged introduction of midwife to patient ratios in Queensland public maternity wards.
  - co-design of a statewide model of care for integrated women's health hubs as part of a \$300,000 commitment
- An uplift in funding for domestic, family and sexual violence support services of \$154.4 million over four years, reflecting a 20 per cent permanent uplift in overall core funding
- \$6.6 million additional funding over four years and \$1.7 million per annum ongoing to the First Nations Justice Office to make the temporary domestic and family violence focused positions permanent
- \$23 million over six years to support the implementation of training aligned with the Domestic and Family Violence Training and Change Management Framework and a statewide Training Support and Coordination Service. This commitment has been made in response to recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and is in addition to significant funding previously announced in that context
- \$14.8 million over two years to provide baseline resources for the delivery of domestic and family violence perpetrator programs.
- \$10.6 million over two years to support the establishment of specialist implementation teams to deliver A Call for Change – Commission of Inquiry into the Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence recommendations



## Our analysis

Guided by gender responsive budgeting practices (GRB), this budget has committed to major areas of investment to support women and girls. This follows considerable spending in recent years implementing the Queensland Women's Strategy 2022-27 and recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

It is positive to see that the gender pay gap is decreasing. However, women in Queensland still have lower levels of participation in the workforce, lower superannuation balances and higher levels of underemployment, despite larger numbers of women completing tertiary education.<sup>10</sup> Further, one in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous partner since the age of 15, and one woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days.<sup>11</sup>

This year's Women's Budget Statement outlined a comprehensive program of work to advance women's equality. It is vitally important for the Queensland Government to continue building momentum in this setting to address persisting gender inequity. We applaud steps taken by the Queensland Government to demonstrate leadership in equitable workplace policies and support, as detailed in this budget, including new leave and superannuation entitlements.

QCOSS is pleased to see the uplift in funding for Queensland Health and specific funding to support the QWGHS. Funding to support the health needs of women and girls will have meaningful impacts

in communities across Queensland. We look forward to the ongoing implementation of this important strategy, including additional investment to support the strategy's six priority areas.

We welcome the permanent uplift in funding for domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) service providers. However, amid soaring levels of demand and increased complexity of need, more will be needed. Additionally, our members call for a shift in investment to ensure that more funding to respond to DFSV goes directly to local frontline service providers, noting that a substantial portion of funding is currently directed to government services and initiatives, such as policing and the courts. We stand by others in our sector who are calling on the Queensland Government to commit to prioritising:

1. A strong and sustainable specialist domestic, family, and sexual violence sector
2. Growing, developing, and retaining specialist workforces
3. Investing in First Nations communities, initiatives, and services.

Other sections of this budget analysis paper discuss additional measures that will also have positive gender impacts such as investment in housing, investment in the community service sector, and investment to implement the Putting Queensland Kids First Plan, which aims to support children and the whole family unit.

<sup>10</sup> State of Queensland. *Women's Budget Statement, Queensland Budget 2024-25*. Queensland Treasury. [https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget\\_2024-25\\_Womens\\_Budget\\_Statement.pdf](https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget_2024-25_Womens_Budget_Statement.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> State of Queensland. (2024). *Domestic and Family Violence Training and Change Management Framework*. Department of Justice and Attorney-General, p 2. <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/dfv-training-change-framework/resource/5b008641-88fc-4f17-af46-585dfef0f67>

This is the second budget supported by gender responsive budgeting (GRB). In 2021 (prior to the adoption of GRB in Queensland), QCOSS released a report that explored opportunities for the implementation of GRB.<sup>12</sup> Drawing upon that analysis and ongoing feedback received from QCOSS members, numerous opportunities for expansion have been identified. For example:

- Further details should be shared to explain the current and planned GRB processes in relation to all government spending. Investment in expanding staff awareness and understanding, capacity building, funding and resources to support the practical implementation of GRB is essential.
- The specific results of GRB processes should also be outlined. In last year's Women's Budget Statement, it was explained that the GRB process resulted in an additional \$16.3 million in funding for women's economic security.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, this year's statement did not provide details on the results of GRB practices, although we do note the considerable investment in supporting women and girls. It was also difficult to determine which measures detailed in the Women's Budget Statement reflected new investment announcements, and which measures were announced and funded under previous budgets.
- Future Women's Budget Statements should comprehensively demonstrate the way in which major spending areas are leveraged to deliver positive gender impacts. For example, this budget included a record \$107.262 billion four-year capital program which should be analysed in depth with a gender lens. Existing measures to leverage spending in this context are promising, for example initiatives to support women to work in the construction industry. However, robust GRB processes can assist to identify opportunities where activities, mechanisms and targets could become more ambitious and impactful.
- It is promising to see initiatives described in the Queensland Women's Budget to attract and retain women towards industries traditionally dominated by men. However, this should be paired with funding commitments to address the lower rates of pay and under-employment experienced in industries and segments of industries that are traditionally dominated by women. The social service sector, for example, must be funded more sustainably to retain skilled professional staff and to compensate staff in line with the immense value they bring to the community. Funding for initiatives under the Queensland Early Childhood Workforce Strategy and Action Plan 2023-27 which were referred to in the Queensland Women's Budget Statement are a positive early step forward in this respect.
- There are also opportunities to adopt increased gender analysis in relation to key economic indicators, increase the application of an intersectional lens in relation to policy impact analysis, and expand investment in data collection for people whose experiences are not fully captured by existing data provisions.
- QCOSS has also released a publication which outlines opportunities to significantly scale up the Queensland Government's approach to Gender Responsive Procurement practices.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Dr Leonora Risse. (2021). *Gender Responsive Budgeting: Locking in Queensland's momentum towards gender equality*. Queensland Council of Social Service. <https://www.qcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/QCOSS-2022-23-pbs4-Make-the-Queensland-budget-work-for-everyone.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> State of Queensland. (2023). *Women's Budget Statement, Queensland Budget 2023-24*. p 11.

<sup>14</sup> Queensland Council of Social Service. (2023). *Gender Equality in Government Procurement Policy, an interjurisdictional review*. <https://www.qcoss.org.au/publication/report-gender-equality-in-government-procurement-policy-an-interjurisdictional-review/>