

## Communities

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The 2021-22 State Budget includes significant funding for housing and homelessness measures, initiatives to prevent family and domestic violence, and a focus on justice services to enhance community safety.

Community safety and crime prevention, including support for vulnerable people, is a key focus of the 2021-22 State Budget. As reflected through their Strategic Community Plans, Local Governments know that community safety is one of the most important issues for local communities. WALGA welcomes this focus on social housing, homelessness and family and domestic violence as this will lead to additional support being provided to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Key announcements include:

- \$1.78 billion investment in the WA Police Force;
- \$875 million committed to social housing, taking the total investment in this Budget to \$2.1 billion;
- \$281.8 million to boost frontline emergency services and help Western Australians recover from major disasters;
- \$45.5 million for family and domestic violence prevention and support measures;
- \$37.2 million to expand the Homestretch pilot into a permanent state-wide program;
- \$12 million for the Safety and Security Rebate for WA Seniors Card members; and
- \$6.2 million investment to increase support payments for Grandcarers.

### Investing in police and justice

The 2021/22 State Budget includes a record investment in community safety and policing, with a number of initiatives that are aimed at reducing offending behaviour with structured activities and a range of supports for victims of crime.

Investment includes:

- \$83.6 million to refurbish and expand police stations;
- Almost \$100 million from the Road Trauma Trust Account for safety initiatives and improvements to dangerous roads and intersections;
- \$27.8 million towards youth and other justice programs for regional communities;

- \$21.4 million contribution to the WA government's ongoing response to the recommendations handed down by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;
- \$7.8 million in additional funding to bolster the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy;
- \$4 million for Legal Aid WA to establish Elder Rights WA and enable increased legal responses to elder abuse; and
- \$1.5 million for the Olabud Doogethu Halls Creek Youth Justice Reinvestment program.

### **Social Housing and homelessness funding**

WALGA welcomes the record \$2.1 billion investment over the next 4 years in 3,300 social housing properties and to deliver new homelessness initiatives. WALGA recognises that Local Government through its planning, health, community development and regulatory powers can facilitate positive local and regional responses to end homelessness, but that the State Government has the lead role in addressing homelessness. The lack of social housing stock over many years has contributed to a growing homelessness issue, and significant investment is required to ensure there is an adequate supply of social housing to support vulnerable community members.

Key initiatives include:

- \$750 million Social Housing Investment Fund;
- \$20 million to renew three ageing social housing precincts in Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton;
- an additional \$38.5 million for expanded capacity at two Common Ground facilities; and
- \$6 million for a Local Government Partnership Fund for Homelessness to partner and co-fund homelessness initiatives tailored to Local Government areas' needs.

The Local Government Partnership Fund for Homelessness was an election commitment of the State Government, and although WALGA welcomes grant funding opportunities that assist Local Governments to implement initiatives that support their local communities, the short term nature of grant funding is a significant constraint to the implementation of long term solutions.

### **Family and domestic violence initiatives**

The 2021/22 Budget includes funding for a range of measures directed at preventing family and domestic violence and supporting vulnerable people. WA Local Governments recognise the prevalence, seriousness and preventable nature of family and domestic violence and WALGA has advocated to the State Government for adequate funding for family and domestic violence programs and services, particularly in regional areas. Additional funding is welcomed although it is noted that the majority of this funding is allocated over the forward estimates period.

A wide range of initiatives are supported, including a Broome Aboriginal-led specialist family violence court, expansion of the Safe at Home program, \$3.4 million to bolster family and domestic violence primary prevention services and support sector capacity building and training; \$1.7 million to boost the Safer Pathways program for women and children in the public housing system, \$2.3 million to expand the Respectful Relationships Program to sport and recreational clubs and organisations, and to continue the program in schools, and \$1.1 million to support the establishment of two additional One-Stop Family and Domestic Violence Hubs, one in Perth and another in regional WA.

### **Responding to emergencies and natural disasters**

The 2021/22 Budget includes close to \$200 million funding for recovery from recent natural disasters, including Commonwealth – State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) for the Wooroloo bushfire, Carnarvon floods and Cyclone Seroja, and for 20 staff to assist with the recovery from Cyclone Seroja. This highlights the increasing costs, to all levels of Government, of the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters. This is further illustrated by the point that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services spent an additional \$24.1 million in 2020-21 to meet unbudgeted bushfire suppression costs for significant fire incidents including Nannup, Gingin, Beekeepers, Red Gully and Wooroloo and in supporting State Emergency Services volunteers when responding to severe weather events.

The State Government will contribute \$175,000 over the forward estimated period for Volunteering WA to develop a State-wide digital platform to support the coordination of emergency volunteering. Other relevant commitments include \$4.9 million contribution towards 4,100 replacement sets of personal protective equipment for volunteer and career firefighters, and \$11.2 million for greater resources and communications capabilities for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.