

STATE BUDGET

2018-19

MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION RACHEL SANDERSON MP MEDIA RELEASE

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State Government makes child protection a priority

The Marshall Liberal Government is committed to protecting the state's most vulnerable children and young people providing additional funding in the 2018-19 State Budget.

The 2018-19 State Budget delivers on a key election promise by allocating an additional \$8.8 million over four years to extend payments to foster and kinship carers for young people in their care to age 21.

"Protecting the state's most vulnerable young people is an absolute priority of the Liberal Government," said Minister for Child Protection, Rachel Sanderson, the first dedicated child protection Minister in South Australia.

"This multi-million dollar funding boost gives children – and now young adults – continued financial support when they need it most.

"The extended foster and kinship care payments to families has a range of long-term benefits. A number of studies show outcomes for young people supported beyond 18 years of age include better employment prospects, improved physical and mental health and drastically reduced incidence of alcohol and drug dependency and interaction with the justice system.

"This commitment also means the state's selfless foster and kinship carers do not have to shoulder the cost burden themselves."

Additional budget expenditure announcements in the 2018-19 State Budget include:

- \$30.9 million to meet additional costs for children in care, which includes \$23.6 million in 2017-18 and \$7.3 million in 2018-19. The Department is working on a strategy to continue to grow the number of placements for children in family-based care and thereby reduce reliance on residential and commercial care.
- \$6.4 million in 2018-19 for the Department for Child Protection to fit out office accommodation in metropolitan and regional areas. With extra staff providing services, this will provide department staff with more accessible offices for improved service delivery for children, young people and their families. The

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Department is not proceeding with a previously considered more expensive northern suburbs option. (Funding provides \$4.4 million of investing expenditure and \$2 million operating expenditure).

“The Department is working on a strategy to further grow the number of placements for children in family-based care. The increased use of foster and kinship care should result in improved outcomes for children and young people in care.” said Minister Sanderson.

“The Liberal Government is committed to recruit more frontline child protection staff as an absolute priority and has delivered on its commitment to broaden the accepted qualifications for child protection workers, so children in care in South Australia can be better supported.

“We are now accepting degree level qualifications that relate to child protection, such as health and human services, in addition to social worker qualifications.

“This new approach is already in place in other jurisdictions and was endorsed by Royal Commissioner, Margaret Nyland.

“Broadening the accepted qualifications aims to reduce vacancies and, in turn, improve outcomes for children and young people.

“The whole community benefits when our children and young people are in safe, secure and loving environments – that is our aim.”

In order to meet the \$715 million savings task by 2021-22 left by the former Labor government and to deliver the new State Government’s priorities, the 2018-19 State Budget includes the following savings measures in the Child Protection portfolio:

- Operating efficiencies within the Department will result in \$13.9 million of savings over four years. This does not include front-line staff. The efficiencies include reducing the number of executive leadership positions and restructuring the delivery of the financial well-being counselling service by outsourcing services to the NGO sector. There will be an estimated reduction of 61 FTEs from 2019-20.
- The Department will not proceed with a budgeted \$3.9 million investing spend on new residential care facilities. This is consistent with the Department’s strategy to focus on growing family-based placements and accessing residential care services provided by non-government organisations.