

# Member briefing

## Victorian State Budget 2026-27



### The Victorian State Budget 2026-27 was handed down by Treasurer Jaclyn Symes on 5 May 2026.

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) have developed this briefing to update members on budget announcements, including what initiatives offer direct benefit to older Victorians, and how this investment aligns with priorities we have previously identified.

### What we advocated for

[Our submission to the Victorian State Budget 2026-27](#) (the Budget) recommended targeted investment across five priority areas to address challenges including preventable social isolation, financial pressure, health and wellbeing inequities, and heightened exposure to climate impacts while harnessing the opportunities of an ageing population. In summary, we advocated for the following priorities:

- Champion a strong vision and voice for older Victorians.
- Prevent and respond to elder abuse.
- Strengthen economic participation and housing security.

- Support healthy ageing and wellbeing.
- Reduce climate-related risks for older Victorians.

These priorities are underpinned by the voices of older Victorians, who described in their own words what they need to age well in Victoria.

### Key takeaways

COTA Victoria and SRV welcome initiatives in the Budget that offer tangible help to people struggling with the cost of living. We acknowledge new investments in essential services and infrastructure that older Victorians rely on, including hospitals, transport and social housing. While these measures aren't specifically targeted towards the needs of older Victorians, their benefits will extend to people of all ages.

We also welcome the modest investment in public sector residential aged care, hospital in-reach services, and aids and equipment to support recovery at home. Further expansion of hospital and community-based care, including urgent care clinics, mental health community hubs, and community hospitals, will also benefit older Victorians.

While we are glad to see renewed investment in family violence prevention, this Budget leaves a clear gap in funding for elder abuse specific prevention and response.

Similarly, the Budget promises little in the way of targeted investment in ageing beyond aged care. Older people often tell us they need tailored, specialised supports when accessing services – something we will continue to advocate for.

We urge the government to recognise that long-term fiscal stability, and the dignity and wellbeing of all Victorians, cannot be maintained without adequate preparation for the changes associated with an ageing population.

## Budget outcomes

### Transport

Public transport will remain free until the end of May, followed by half-price fares for the rest of 2026. This is complemented by an investment in new and improved bus services, and a 20% rebate on light vehicle registration, providing up to \$186 per car.

While the Budget responds strongly to transport related pressures and improve affordability, these measures are not specifically targeted towards the accessibility needs of older people. There is limited focus on community transport, physical accessibility, or tailored services for those with reduced mobility, particularly in regional areas.

### What this means

Reduced fares and expanded services provide immediate financial relief and may improve access to services and social participation, particularly for older people on fixed incomes.

However, benefits depend on accessibility, and without age-friendly transport options, some, especially those with mobility challenges or in underserved areas, may miss out.

## Community safety and the prevention of elder abuse

Our budget submission called for targeted investment in elder abuse prevention, including a statewide prevention campaign, and expanded legal and advocacy services, including in relation to financial abuse. While there is a general emphasis on prevention and community safety, this is primarily focused on youth offending and broader policing measures, we were disappointed to see that elder abuse was not reflected in these initiatives.

The Budget includes additional investment in community safety, with increased resourcing for Victoria Police and \$33 million for the Violence Reduction Unit, focused on early intervention and prevention. It also introduces measures addressing drivers of vulnerability for older people, although these are not explicitly framed as family violence prevention. These include increased funding for multicultural seniors' groups, expansion of Tenancy Plus, and support through the Aids and Equipment Program.

Broader initiatives such as cost-of-living relief, indexed carer allowances, and guardianship support may also help reduce dependency and risk.

### What this means

The expansion of general safety initiatives may provide some indirect benefits, particularly where they improve overall community safety or enable victim survivors to enhance their personal safety.

These investments may also strengthen protective factors by reducing isolation, improving independence, and supporting housing stability. Social connection initiatives may help reduce loneliness, while tenancy and financial supports may alleviate stress and reduce reliance on informal or potentially harmful support arrangements.

However, the absence of targeted elder abuse measures means that key gaps remain in prevention, early intervention, and response. Without dedicated investment, opportunities to strengthen system capacity and address the specific drivers of elder abuse may be limited.

## Housing

The Budget continues investment in social housing through the \$860 million Social Housing Growth Fund, aiming to deliver 7,000 homes, alongside \$6.1 million to expand Tenancy Plus for renters at risk of homelessness. While welcome, this comes amid over 56,000

households on the waitlist, with priority applicants waiting an average of 17 months.

Housing was the most pressing issue identified in our survey to older people, with 52% of respondents nominating it as a high funding priority.

### What this means

For older people, increased housing supply and tenancy support may contribute to improved housing stability, particularly for those already within the social housing system.

However, without targeted prioritisation or tailored housing responses, many older people, particularly renters in the private market, may continue to face housing insecurity. Given the strong link between housing instability, financial stress, and vulnerability to elder abuse, this remains a significant gap.

## Health

Government investment in health infrastructure and services in growth areas, including \$95 million for the Werribee Mercy Hospital ED, \$87.2 million for community hospitals, and a \$50 million boost to Ambulance Victoria. This is complemented by \$10 million to expand care for more than 4,500 people with chronic disease. Expansion of urgent care clinics, mental health community hubs, and community hospitals, will also benefit older Victorians

Our submission identified health services as a high priority for 48% of respondents, particularly

in relation to access, system pressure, and timely care. The budget aligns at a system level, with strong investment in infrastructure and service capacity. However, there is limited explicit focus on older people as a distinct cohort, particularly in areas such as geriatric care, care coordination, and access to mental health services.

An additional \$1.2 million per annum supports guardianship arrangements for older patients without decision-making capacity managed by the Office of the Public Advocate.

### What this means

For older people, these investments are likely to improve access to health care and reduce pressure on emergency departments and ambulance services. Expanded community hospitals and chronic disease programs will support earlier intervention and better management of ongoing conditions.

However, without targeted strategies to support older people's engagement with services, some barriers to access may persist.

## Disability

The 2026-27 Budget includes investments to maintain and strengthen supports for people with disability, particularly those excluded from the NDIS. This includes \$41.5 million over two years for critical supports such as advocacy and family services, and \$5.0 million for aids and equipment. This under 65 will also benefit from investment in the continuation of the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People.

Our submission emphasised the importance of disability supports in maintaining independence and reducing vulnerability for older Victorians. The budget shows some alignment, although supports for those who fall outside the NDIS are largely focused on children and young people.

### What this means

For older people, these measures are likely to support independence, reduce reliance on informal care, and improve access to essential equipment and services. This may also reduce risk factors associated with elder abuse, including dependency and financial vulnerability.

However, the continued separation between aged care and disability systems may limit the overall effectiveness of these supports for older cohorts.

## Caring

The Budget includes targeted support for carers, primarily through \$3.6 million per annum over four years to index care allowances for foster, kinship, and permanent carers in line with the Consumer Price Index. This aims to provide cost-of-living relief and support the sustainability of caring arrangements.

Our submission highlighted the importance of carer support in reducing stress and mitigating risks associated with dependency and family conflict. While the budget includes a positive step in recognising cost pressures, the focus is largely on carers of children and young people, with limited direct support for carers of older people.

## What this means

While broader cost-of-living relief may ease some pressures, the absence of targeted supports for those caring for older people represents a gap.

Strengthening support for informal carers in this context would likely improve outcomes for both carers and older people, including reducing risk factors associated with elder abuse.

## Aged care

The 2026-27 Budget includes targeted investment in residential aged care and care delivery. This includes a \$35.7 million one-off boost to support nurse-to-resident ratios, \$16.1 million over four years to grow the workforce to support expanded medication management roles, and \$4.1 million per annum to continue the Residential in Reach program from hospitals.

While our submission highlighted the need for improved aged care access and integration with health services, the budget provides a relatively targeted but limited response. Investment is focused on maintaining service quality and workforce capacity rather than broader system reform or expansion of access to care.

## What this means

For older people, these measures may improve quality of care within residential settings, particularly through strengthened staffing ratios and workforce development. Programs such as

Residential in Reach may reduce unnecessary hospital transfers and improve continuity of care.

However, the impact is likely to be concentrated within existing service users, with limited expansion of access or support for those outside formal care systems.

## Energy

The Budget includes measures to improve energy affordability, including concessions delivering average savings of around \$629 per household. This includes a 17.5% reduction on energy bills and 50% discounts on rates and water charges. Additional support includes \$1.1 million for the Energy Assistance Program, which has helped over 15,000 households save nearly \$3 million, alongside continued reforms to the Victorian Energy Upgrades Program to support efficiency and long-term affordability.

Our consultation identified cost-of-living pressures, including energy affordability, as a key concern for older people, particularly those on fixed incomes. While the continuation of concessions aligns well with this need, the measures are largely broad-based rather than targeted to older cohorts or those experiencing heightened vulnerability.

## What this means

For older people, energy concessions and support programs are likely to provide meaningful financial relief, particularly

given higher energy usage associated with health needs and time spent at home. Programs that support bill navigation and energy efficiency may also help reduce longer-term costs. However, without targeted outreach or tailored supports, some older people, particularly those who are digitally excluded or socially isolated, may face barriers in accessing these benefits.

## Economic wellbeing and cost of living

The Budget includes \$2.7 million to expand financial counselling services, increasing frontline support and geographic coverage. While not explicitly framed as consumer protection or elder abuse prevention, these services can help reduce financial stress and vulnerability. The Budget also provides several cost-of-living supports, including concessions, energy bill assistance, expanded financial counselling, and indexed carer allowances. These measures deliver immediate relief and reflect a continued focus on reducing essential living costs.

This aligns in part with our submission, which emphasised the role of financial literacy, advocacy, and support services in preventing financial abuse and helping older people navigate complex systems. However, the Budget does not specifically target older people or financial abuse.

Consultations with older Victorians identified cost-of-living pressures as a defining issue, often compounded by fixed incomes, housing insecurity, and rising service costs. While the

Budget recognises these pressures through broad-based relief, there is limited targeted support for particularly vulnerable groups, including older renters, low-income pensioners, and those experiencing social isolation.

### What this means

Increased access to financial counselling will help some Victorians manage cost-of-living pressures, avoid debt, and make informed decisions, which may reduce exposure to financial abuse and coercion.

However, without targeted or age-appropriate approaches, the impact for older people is likely to be uneven. Barriers such as low digital literacy, mobility limitations, and limited awareness of services may restrict access. While these measures provide some relief, many older Victorians, particularly those on fixed incomes or facing housing, health, or care costs, may continue to experience strain. More targeted support will be needed to reach those at risk.

### Next steps

We will continue to advocate and support the interests and needs of older people, alongside the provision of support and legal services through SRV. With a state election approaching in November 2026, we are actively promoting [our election platform](#) amongst key decision makers to ensure ageing is firmly on the agenda for the next Victorian State Parliament.