

STATE BUDGET 2020-21

TREASURER HON ROB LUCAS MLC MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 10 November 2020

Vulnerable South Australians supported in State Budget

The Marshall Liberal Government is committed to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of South Australians – particularly those who are our most vulnerable.

The State Budget 2020-21 allocates \$7.2 billion to health, \$3.9 billion to education and \$609 million to child protection this financial year.

An extra \$124 million is provided over four years to child protection to meet the costs of an increase in the number of children and young people in care.

Treasurer Rob Lucas also announced a new support package for Vulnerable South Australians, providing targeted relief and assistance to those in the community suffering severe hardship as a result of COVID-19.

The \$4.1 million package will fund grants for a range of initiatives, including food and goods relief – including the activities of NGOs, emergency financial assistance and financial counselling services.

“We know there are many people in the community who are still doing it extremely tough, and this package will ensure they are supported,” said Mr Lucas.

“Of this funding, \$650,000 will go towards increasing the capacity of our Emergency Financial Assistance Program, administered through the Department of Human Services, providing emergency grants to vulnerable South Australians to use on food and goods relief.

“We’ve seen growing demand for the program, with nearly 2000 recipients in May and June alone – and of these, more than 600 were international students.”

This is in addition to \$13.8 million over 2 years to support international students who have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, including emergency cash grants to eligible tertiary students of \$1000 (paid as two grants of \$500) and one-off \$200 payments to homestay families to support accommodation for international students.

Mr Lucas said the Government was also extending its Residential Rental Relief Scheme, which now provides up to \$2,000 to residential landlords who reduce the rent of a tenant experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eligibility criteria for the grant has been expanded to ensure many more South Australians have access to rent relief, including casual workers and temporary visa holders, who otherwise wouldn't be able to access the scheme because they don't qualify for JobKeeper. A second round of rental grants of up to a further \$1,000 for residential landlords who provide rent relief to a tenant between 1 October 2020 and 30 March 2021 has also been introduced, taking the total amount of relief available to \$2,000.

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Mr Lucas has also announced a \$32.9 million investment over four years to support 750 additional traineeships and apprenticeships in government agencies and funded projects in qualifications that are assessed as having high growth potential. This includes cyber security, aged care, disability services and in housing construction.

Not only will this initiative provide government-funded employment during the training period, it will equip trainees and apprentices with valuable qualifications with which to pursue ongoing employment in their chosen field.

“In recognition of the valuable work and contribution of our public sector employees – from nurses and police officers to tram drivers – we have continued to offer and settle sensible wage increases unlike other jurisdictions that have frozen annual public sector wage increases,” said Mr Lucas.

The Budget also provides \$76 million in support for the housing construction industry as it transitions following the significant stimulus impact of the HomeBuilder grants.

The Government has announced the expansion to the Starter Loan eligibility criteria to enable those on modest incomes to access an interest free loan for up to 5 years through HomeStart. The Government will consider a range of initiatives to support the market, including shared equity for new home construction and opportunities to promote community and affordable housing.

\$5.2 million will also be invested in a targeted solar concessions trial for up to 1,000 existing state concession card-holding households.

The trial will deliver larger bill savings for concession-card holders by installing solar panels on their homes, in lieu of receiving energy and cost-of-living concession payments.