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**Victorian Budget 2020/21 creates a stronger, more cohesive state:
Jesuit Social Services**

The Victorian Government's 2020/21 Budget, handed down today, provides unprecedented funding to vital social services and supports to help all Victorians to navigate through the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, says Jesuit Social Services.

"Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas said today that COVID-19 has shone a bright light on some of the dark cracks in our society, and this is absolutely true. This crisis has clearly demonstrated the importance of fundamentals we should all have access to – like secure housing, stable employment and access to a strong and effective mental health system," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"Many of these societal cracks have been evident before now but COVID-19 has shown us how quickly people can slip through and be in urgent need of support. This Budget strengthens our social fabric and will ensure that more Victorians have the opportunity to flourish moving forward."

Key Budget announcements include a \$5.3 billion investment into social and affordable housing and \$868 million to fix Victoria's mental health system.

"These are significant investments that give many vulnerable Victorians a chance to lead more positive and productive lives. The investment into social and affordable housing, which will support the construction of 9,300 new social housing units and 2,900 new affordable homes, gives more Victorians a place to call home and helps people to work towards healthy and fulfilling futures," says Ms Edwards.

"Similarly, the investment into improving Victoria's mental health system ahead of the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System in early 2021 will improve outcomes for millions of people.

"This investment will support new mental health and acute treatment beds, provide early intervention support to young people doing it tough and address workforce shortages. The need for a stronger mental health system that meets the needs of all Victorians has been shown during the pandemic, and this funding supports this goal."

Jesuit Social Services also welcomes the \$1 billion investment into TAFE and training, funding for inclusive education, sick pay for insecure workers, energy efficiency packages including in the social housing system, additional training for the youth justice workforce and addressing family violence.

"These investments show strong leadership in a time of need, and a commitment to ensure all Victorians have the chance to thrive."

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