

SOME RELIEF FOR CARE FAMILIES IN THE 2024 VICTORIAN BUDGET

KCV notes, with mixed feelings, a number of budget items in the 2024 Victorian Budget which are of relevance to kinship carers. Whilst being grateful for the funding of these programs from within in the financial abyss into which Victoria has plummeted, KCV is nevertheless frustrated at the overall failure of the budget to recognise the daily grind of poverty that some kinship carers are struggling to combat and the need to empower them with increased payments that give them spending power over their lives.

The carer help desk

This service which assists new carers with passport and Medicare card applications and other paper work attached to setting up the placement of the children in their care, has been awarded ongoing funding from this budget forward. This is very welcome news!

Reunification

The project work to improve the response to reunification has been refunded. This is good news! However, more needs to be done in relation to reunification.

The school saving bonus

The School Saving Bonus provides \$400 in support for every child at government schools, and eligible concession card holders at non-government schools. Families will receive a credit on their school family account to help meet the cost of activities and uniforms. Cash will not be paid directly to individuals or families.

The Bonus will be provided during Term 4 of 2024, making sure families have time to plan and budget for the 2025 school year ahead.

ELIGIBILITY

For Parents and carers of every child enrolled in a government school in 2025 . If your child attends a government school, you do not need to apply or do anything to receive the School Saving Bonus; the funds will be provided to your child's school.

For non-government schools, families eligible for the means -tested Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, including healthcare and concession card holders, will also be eligible for the additional \$400 support. The application process for non -government schools will be the same as the existing Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund.

OTHER EDUCATION SUPPORTS

The one-off School Saving Bonus will be in addition to existing and continuing means -tested supports for camps, sports, excursions and uniforms. This helps to ensure that families most in need continue to get additional support.

The application-based Affordable School Uniform program , available through State Schools' Relief to families experiencing financial hardship or other forms of vulnerability and short -term crisis, will continue to be available for families to access if they need additional support beyond the School Saving Bonus. This program allows schools to make multiple applications for support on parents' behalf throughout the year if needed.

More guidance to schools and families will be made available in Term 3, 2024.

Glasses for kids

This funding \$6.8 million to continue and expand the program, which provides free vision screening and (if required) follow up testing and glasses for students in Prep – Year 3 in participating schools. The investment will allow for a tripling of the current program, providing access to more students in additional primary schools across Victoria.

WHAT THE FUNDING COVERS

Glasses for Kids provides free vision screening and if needed, further testing and free glasses to participating Prep to Year 3 students.

It is managed and delivered by State Schools' Relief. Between 2024 and 2027, State Schools' Relief is intending to visit 297 schools and offer free vision screening and testing to approximately 34,000 Prep to Year 3 students.

ELIGIBILITY

Glasses for Kids is delivered to targeted schools in the most disadvantaged areas across Victoria. All Prep to Year 3 students in the targeted schools are invited to participate. State Schools' Relief will invite targeted schools to participate.

The schools are targeted based on their relative levels of disadvantage in the communities in which they are located.

The parents of all Prep to Year 3 students in the targeted schools will be invited by State Schools' Relief to participate.

Further information on the program is available here: <https://www.vic.gov.au/glasses-for-kids>

Get Active kids vouchers

\$6 million has been made available to continue this program, which provides \$200 vouchers to assist eligible families with costs relating to kids' sport.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for a voucher your child/dependent must be:

- aged 0 to 18 years
- a resident in Victoria
- named on a valid Australian Government Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card
- named on a valid Australian Government Medicare Card.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A VOUCHER

You can apply for more than one voucher if you have more than one eligible child. You can apply for multiple children on the one application.

Apply at <https://service.vic.gov.au/find-services/outdoor-and-recreation/get-active-kids> to receive your voucher to use with an approved activity provider. Present the voucher code to your activity provider and get up to \$200 off the registration and membership fee (as well as any included uniforms and/or equipment).