

Justice

Funding for justice in the State Budget has focused closely on crisis-end services, such as prisons and policing, with little investment in community-based solutions to address the underlying causes of crime. A big focus was on Operation Regional Shield and expansions to prison infrastructure. Previous funding announcements for Banksia Hill also needs to be spent and operationalised. Some of these investments are positive, particularly improved mental health and alcohol and other drug support in prisons, however this approach is not sustainable. A therapeutic approach within detention is needed to effectively rehabilitate and end the regular incidents and disruptions in Banksia Hill. Funding for smart justice such as early intervention, justice reinvestment approaches, and alternatives to custody are needed to improve outcomes in the community before crime occurs.

Initiative	Operation Regional Shield (BP2, V2, P400)
Investment	\$11.7 million in 2023/24
Description	Operation Regional Shield is an investment announced in 2022 to provide additional police staff and resources to the crime affected regions. This significant investment follows last year's \$2.5 million investment, extending the increased resources.
Implications	The previous three budgets have made continuous investments into policing. However, efforts to reduce crime must ensure they address the underlying causes, which are primarily social and economic. The WA Police Union has labelled this initiative 'unsustainable'.

Initiative	Criminal Law (Mental Impairment) Reforms (BP2, V2, P415)
Investment	\$4.68 million in 2023-24
Description	This election commitment repeals previous legislation and provides a framework for people with mental impairment in the justice system. These reforms limit custody orders and allow the judiciary additional options for people who are mentally impaired and found unfit to stand trial. This funding is split across multiple departments and agencies and includes funding for Legal Aid.
Implications	This is a significant and highly welcomed improvement for Western Australia's justice system and is aligned with human rights standards after condemnation from the United Nations. Improving therapeutic and appropriate options available to the judiciary should ensure responses in the courts are effective and improve community safety.

Initiative	Banksia Hill Detention Centre – Increased Mental Health In-Reach (BP2, V1, P322)
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Investment	\$8.8 million over the next four years
Description	This is progressing the Child and Adolescent Forensic Service (CAFS), including a dedicated multidisciplinary service for young people at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. The CAFS aims to improve the mental health and social outcomes of those in detention, on transition out of detention, living in the community that are at risk of offending, and those otherwise involved in the justice system.
Implications	There has been a significant increase in self-harm and suicide attempts in Banksia and Unit 18. This additional funding is welcome, however ongoing staffing issues and lockdowns at Banksia Hill and Unit 18 may pose problems operationalising the new service.

Initiative	Banksia Hill Detention Centre – Upgrades and Urgent Works (BP2, V2, P429)
Investment	\$35.15 million over the next three years
Description	Infrastructures upgrades are required at Banksia Hill Detention Centre after significant damage to cells and security risks. This funding includes roof and fence treatments, CCTV upgrades and creation of a dedicated Crisis Care Unit. \$30.4 million of this is to be spent in 2023/24.
Implications	The May Riot at Banksia Hill has further damaged infrastructure, which may delay completion of urgent works. Completion of these works is required to close the Unit 18 facility in Casuarina Prison which has been used to house several young people after major damage.

Initiative	Banksia Hill Detention Centre – New Service Model (BP3, P155)
Investment	\$15.9 million
Description	A new model-of-care and operating philosophy for Banksia Hill was developed in 2022 after previous attempts to change the culture at the centre had failed to last. This funding is to implement this new service model focused on improving therapeutic and rehabilitative care including an additional 38 Youth Custodial Officers at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.
Implications	Banksia Hill needs urgent improvements after a series of high-profile incidents. Successful implementation of a model-of-care to provide therapeutic support is critical to improve safety for staff and the community. However, issues attracting and retaining staff have posed ongoing problems – worsened by the poor quality-of-care currently inside the centre.

Initiative	Increased funding for Community Legal Centres and Legal Aid private practitioners (BP2, V2, P416)
Investment	\$9.5 million for Community Legal Centres over 4 years. \$14.6 million for Legal Aid over 4 years
Description	Community Legal Centres (CLCs) have received boost funding of \$9.5 million for 23-24 and 24-25. This is a continuation of boost funding in 2022-23 of around \$3.7million, which is not shown in the budget. CLCs have also been included in the Non-Government Human Services Indexation Policy for the first time. The Legal Aid funding enables Legal Aid to increase the hourly rate for outsourcing matters to practitioners that deliver legal services via grants of aid.
Implications	The CLC funding boost will enable CLCs to continue vital services across the state, with a small increase to help meet costs or raise services slightly, in a context of rising demand. The funding term is for two years, which aligns with the funding provided to CLCs by State government via the National Legal Assistance Partnership agreement.

Initiative	Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy (BP2, V2, P416)
Investment	\$11.8 million over the next 2 years
Description	The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy aims to engage young individuals in a variety of culturally appropriate activities and tackle the disproportionate representation and imprisonment of Aboriginal people within the criminal justice system. Efforts are also directed towards addressing the issue of a high number of young children encountering the justice system in the Kimberley region.
Implications	This funding continues prior investment in the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy. There is a need for culturally-appropriate and Aboriginal-led initiatives across Western Australia.

Initiative	Casuarina Prison Alcohol and Other Drug Unit (BP2, V2, P415)
Investment	\$6 million in 2023/24
Description	The funding is an election commitment to extend the AOD service at Casuarina Prison providing offenders with mental health, alcohol and other drug needs with access to appropriate services.
Implications	Prisoners often have complex needs and require multidisciplinary, rehabilitative supports. This is a welcome investment to provide appropriate services for people inside prisons. Investment is needed, however, to improve throughcare and preventative supports based in the community.

Initiative	Banned Drinkers Register/Takeaway Alcohol Management System (BP2, V2, P529)
Investment	\$10.2 million across three years to 2025/26, including \$2.26 million to expand the trial into Carnarvon.
Description	The Banned Drinkers Register aims to reduce alcohol-related harm by restricting high-risk drinkers from purchasing packaged liquor. This initiative is currently being trialled in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields.
Implications	A review of the program by UWA found small numbers of registered banned drinkers, and alcohol and other drug experts believe it will have little impact on alcohol-related harm. There is a need to focus on underlying causes of excessive drinking and domestic violence to make a community-wide impact. The impacts of this program being applied in specific regions remains to be seen.

Initiative	Target 120 Extension (BP2, V2, P502)
Investment	\$14.7 million over the next 2 years
Description	Target 120 is an early intervention program for young people at risk of repeat offending and engagement with the justice system and works intensively with young people and their families. This funding is to expand the program to nine additional sites, including the Kimberley and the Pilbara.
Implications	Target 120 has seen significant investment in recent years, but evaluation details have not been released. Early intervention with children and families is highly welcome, but evidence of effectiveness is needed to guide this program and ensure it is achieving results. It is our hope to see this program with promising results to hand over the reins to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in other T120 locations. Initiatives such as this must include housing for workers as part of the cost.

Initiative	Roebourne Regional Prison Air-Conditioning (BP2, V2, P429)
Investment	\$14.5 million in 2023-24
Description	This funding will install air conditioning in every cell at Roebourne Prison in the Pilbara region, where temperatures have exceeded 50 degrees in the summer.
Implications	This is a major improvement that will improve safety and prisoners' health and has been long called for by advocates. The overincarceration of Aboriginal people has meant previous dangerous conditions have risked a potential death in custody.

Aboriginal Wellbeing

There is spending spread across a number of areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The most significant new spending is \$77 million on renewal of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and related services, plus sizeable investments for the Aboriginal Community Connectors program and Remote municipal upgrades (mostly waterworks), which is good news for regional and remote communities. While some money is allocated for housing and short stays, it's questionable whether the level of investment will be sufficient for communities already experiencing severe overcrowding and recently hit by floods. We are pleased to see funds for the new Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Peak Body.

Initiative	Housing and Homelessness (BP3, P134)
Investment	\$8,300,000 - Geraldton Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation
Description	Establish, operate and maintain the Geraldton Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation facility, with operations expected to commence mid-2025.
Implications	First Nations peoples coming into Geraldton for services will be able to access safe, culturally-appropriate accommodation.

Initiative	Peak Bodies and Leadership (1. BP3, P94; 2. BP2, V2, P522)
Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$6,000,000 - Aboriginal Community Controlled Peak Body 2. \$412,000 – Empowered Youth Network funding removed
Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This body will provide a centralised point for interaction and collaboration between the Government, ACCOs and Aboriginal communities. 2. Funding unspent in 2022-23 budget that has not been carried over to 2023-24 budget.
Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The peak will work to increase ACCOs' capabilities as service providers to Aboriginal communities in Western Australia and assist in fulfilling Western Australia's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the forthcoming ACCO Strategy. 2. We note the discontinuation of funding for the Empowered Youth network, which began conceptually in 2017 and concluded its design phase in 2021. The EYN purpose was to develop a group of young leaders across the Kimberley to give them a voice on decisions that affected them, we would like to see an explanation for this decision.

Initiative	Regional and Remote Communities (BP3, P96 & P134)
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Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$673,000 - Bidyadanga Project to complete stage one. 2. \$31,100,000 - Aboriginal Community Connectors Program.
Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A partnership between the Government, community residents, leaseholders and native title holders to reform land tenure. 2. Investment over four years to continue the program in 13 locations across WA.
Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A sustainable future for Bidyadanga, Western Australia's largest remote Aboriginal community. 2. First Nations peoples can access culturally responsive crisis supports including mediation and engagement services and safe transport options to support personal and community safety.

Initiative	Heritage and Country (BP2, V2, P692 & P714)
Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$27,500,000 - Wadjemup Burial Ground 2. \$77,000,000 - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Services
Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Upgrades to the Wadjemup Burial Ground and repairs to the Quod building on Rottne Island, including funding for consultation to develop a plan for the site. 2. Ongoing operational costs associated with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 and to fund Local Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Services.
Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing protection for important Aboriginal cultural heritage sites on Wadjemup. 2. Important investment into Aboriginal Heritage across Western Australia, in line with the new act passed in 2021.

Initiative	Family and Domestic Violence Spending (BP2, V2, P502,503)
Investment	\$1,100,000 - Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program
Description	Funds for the provision of culturally appropriate services for victims of Family and Domestic Violence in regional areas.
Implications	It's positive to see commitment to education and prevention of family and domestic violence, particularly culturally appropriate services, however funding needs to be scaled up in this space to meet community needs.

Initiative	Health and Mental Health (BP2, V1, P296, 322, 322)
Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$18,300,00 - Southwest Aboriginal Medical Service Health Hub 2. \$5,800,000 - Aboriginal Mental Health Workers 3. \$5,400,000 - Psychiatric Services in the East Kimberley

Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Matched Commonwealth funding to support construction of South West Aboriginal Health Hub in Bunbury. 2. Employment of 10 additional Aboriginal Mental Health Workers (10 FTE). 3. Continuation of psychiatry and staff educator positions in East Kimberley.
Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aboriginal people living in the South West will have access to additional mental health programs and other health services. 2. Infants, Children and Adolescents Taskforce will be able to hire more Aboriginal Mental Health Workers to provide culturally-safe mental health support. 3. Ongoing commitment to Aboriginal Youth Wellbeing in the East Kimberley by continuing specialist psychiatric services in the region.