FROM THE OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

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A FAIRER VICTORIA: DELIVERING A STRONG SAFETY NET FOR ALL VICTORIANS

The fifth instalment of the Victorian Labor Government’s A Fairer Victoria package delivers a $925.6 million budget boost to help vulnerable Victorians during tough economic times, including a funding boost for out of home care, mental health, disability services, social housing, autism support and assistance for senior Victorians.

The Treasurer, John Lenders, said the Brumby Labor Government was committed to helping Victorians through the Global Financial Crisis.

“The Brumby Labor Government’s 2009 State Budget builds on a decade of investment in social services, to provide a strong safety net for all Victorians,” Mr Lenders said.

“This package helps to ensure the most vulnerable in our community do not bear the brunt of the Global Financial Crisis.”

Mr Lenders said the Brumby Labor Government was delivering a record boost of $134.7 million to the State’s out of home care services to help Victorian children unable to live with their parents, including the recruitment of 100 new live-in carers for children with challenging behaviours.

This includes $10 million to modernise, renovate or redevelop residential care facilities for children and young Victorians in out of home care. In addition, the 2009 State Budget allocates an extra $14.6 million to boost the capacity of the after hours child protection emergency and crisis service.

He said the Brumby Labor Government would recruit up to 280 mental health workers as part of a $150.6 million package to reform mental health services in Victoria.

“The Brumby Labor Government is taking action now to deliver more mental health workers to support Victorian families in tough times and for the future,” Mr Lenders said.

A further $26 million would be invested to extend the Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Renewal initiatives to help vulnerable Victorians into jobs and to create vibrant liveable communities, as part of an $85.8 million boost to community facilities and additional assistance to low income families.

Mr Lenders said the 2009 State Budget would continue to invest in flexible, personalised support for Victorians with a disability with an $86.9 million investment in disability services.

He said the centrepiece of the disability package included $59.1 million to help Victorians with a disability to live independent and fulfilling lives, by giving individuals a choice of services and how they live in the community.
Other highlights of the 2009 State Budget's investments in *A Fairer Victoria* include:

- **$104.8 million** to invest in housing and homelessness programs;
- **$60.6 million** to help senior Victorians remain secure at home and access high quality aged care services;
- **$56.1 million** to close the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal Victorians and non-Indigenous Victorians and for other Indigenous programs;
- **$8.3 million** to support Victorian children, adolescents and adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder; and
- **$4.6 million** to further strengthen Victoria’s thriving multicultural community.

Mr Lenders said the Brumby Labor Government is taking action to promote community respect with a **$17.7 million** respect strategy, including $9.3 million to encourage Victorians, especially young people, to volunteer their time and effort to help community organisations across the State.