

ELAA's BUDGET SUBMISSION TO THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT 2015-2016



A key part of the policy work we undertake each year is advocacy to government on behalf of our members. ELAA's Budget Submission to the Victorian State Government 2015–2016 was presented to the Andrews Government in December 2014.

ELAA's Budget Submission focuses on the need to invest in quality programs, progressive policy and most importantly in our people: service providers, educators, families and children.

The following pages summarise the priority actions and additional opportunities we believe the new Government needs to address in order to provide our children with high quality early learning programs.

The full submission is available on the ELAA website: elaa.org.au/news_advocacy/policy_submissions.

ELAA welcomes member contributions to and feedback on our advocacy work around early childhood education and care policy issues. Please contact us at elaa@elaa.org.au.

Priority actions

We believe the new Victorian Government should address the following priorities to ensure that high quality early learning continues to enrich the development and wellbeing of all children and improve outcomes throughout their lives.

We ask that the new Government focus on the following actions within our identified priorities:

Programs – Minimum of 15 hours of kindergarten

- Negotiate a long-term and transparent funding agreement with the Commonwealth that will ensure that funding for 15 hours of quality early learning continues to be available to children in the year before school – beyond 2015.

Policy – Support the NQF

- Ensure that the National Quality Framework in Victoria is not diluted and continues to deliver quality early learning outcomes.

People – Resolve the industrial dispute

- Act promptly to help resolve the ongoing industrial dispute between not-for-profit and local government kindergarten providers, and the Australian Education Union.

Additional opportunities

We also ask that the new Government consider the additional opportunities detailed below in order to strengthen the early learning sector in Victoria, and to provide children with the best possible start in life. The additional opportunities we have identified are:

Programs

- **Strengthen kindergarten cluster management (KCM)** by:
 - providing stewardship and a transparent and accountable framework for the future development of KCM
 - creating incentives for existing KCMs to invest in growth and expansion
 - providing a stable, more flexible operating environment for KCMs
 - supporting the ongoing viability of KCMs through appropriate funding
- **Review the per capita funding model**, and develop a realistic funding model for kindergarten services that takes into account the actual costs of providing the service in the existing policy environment
- **Review the quantum of the rural funding supplement**, the criteria to access this supplement, and continue to fund the small rural grants initiative
- **Work with the sector to halve the gap in developmental outcomes** (as defined in the AEDC), by 2020 for children from Victoria's most disadvantaged communities, by implementing a range of initiatives identified in this submission
- **Support children with disabilities and additional needs** to access early learning services and receive the additional assistance they require post enrolment.

Policy

- **Make kindergarten genuinely universally accessible** by fully funding the provision of 15 hours of kindergarten for all children in the year before school, and 5 hours of kindergarten for all three-year-old children
- **Work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure the full implementation of the NQF** and in particular maintain current minimum:
 - staffing qualification requirements for education and care services – including Diploma level qualifications for 50% of educators working with children under 3 years
 - educator: child ratios in education and care services and moving to a ratio of 1: 11 for children 3–5 years by 2016.

People

- **Develop standards for training providers in Victoria** to ensure they produce early childhood staff fully equipped for work in services.