



EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA – THE VOICE FOR PARENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Victorian State Budget delivers on Labor's election commitments – but there's more work to do

The 2015-16 Victorian State Budget released today confirmed the new Labor Government's election commitments to support children in early childhood education and care services.

"We welcome the \$59 million of new investments in the budget, but there is more work to be done to ensure services can continue to deliver quality early learning, and keep all our kindergartens financially viable into the future," said Shane Lucas, CEO of Early Learning Association Australia.

The Government will invest \$50 million over four years in capital grants to build new integrated children's hubs in rapidly growing areas across outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

"These grants will also be available to local councils and independent services wanting to upgrade existing facilities, and they will assist services to meet the infrastructure needs arising from implementation of new educator-to-children ratios from 1 January 2016," Mr Lucas said.

The Budget also includes \$9 million over four years to maintain 150 Early Childhood Intervention Services and 150 Flexible Support Packages for preschool children with disabilities or developmental delays.

"We welcome these important investments, but we know that many services will be under financial strain as the new ratios are implemented next year and many services will need more Government help to be sustainable," Mr Lucas said.

"We are hopeful that the Government will keep the Premier's campaign commitment to work with employers and unions to reach a new enterprise agreement for early childhood educators.

"ELAA will work with the Government to support services as they implement the new ratios – and we will continue to work with the Department of Education and Training, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Australian Education Union to try to resolve the industrial dispute.

"But these shared tasks will require additional funding from Government if they are to be successfully achieved.

"Now that the Federal Government has committed to its share of kindergarten funding for another two years, we will be asking the Victorian Government to do more also."

Media contact: Shane Lucas, CEO, ELAA - Phone: 0417 308 751 or 03 9489 3500