



25 October, 2017

Celebrating 75,000 Victorian Children Made Safer On Our Roads

Road trauma is one of the leading causes of death among young Australians¹ and Victoria has been leading the way to make our children safer in cars and on our roads.

A key part of the strategy is Victoria's *Starting Out Safely* Road Safety Education Program which is celebrating a major milestone: over 75,000 Victorian preschool children have now been reached by the program and learnt about being safe in cars and on our roads.

The Victorian program – delivered by Early Learning Association Australia on behalf of VicRoads – is unique in Australia in that it is delivered directly through early childhood education services, such as kindergartens and long day care centres.

To celebrate making 75,000 Victorian children safer on our roads, ELAA and Vic Roads have invited the stars of the *Starting Out Safely* program – Professor Eric Speriment and his friend, ThingleToodle – to join the children at Albert Park Kindergarten for some great road safety fun.

The event will also be attended by Victoria's Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Luke Donnellan, who said the program is an important investment in road safety.

"Our children are some of our most vulnerable road users, that's why we're investing in this program to keep them safe on our roads."

"This ground-breaking program was developed to align with the National Quality Standards for quality early childhood education and care services, as well as the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework," said ELAA CEO, Shane Lucas.

"It is a hugely popular and successful program and we have been very proud to deliver it on behalf for VicRoads since 2011. To have now delivered the program to over 75,000 young children is a fantastic achievement," Mr Lucas said.

The program differs from other Australian states in that it takes a holistic approach to road safety education. It not only reaches out directly to children through dedicated 'ThingleToodle' sessions at their preschool and care centres, but also provides professional development for early childhood

¹ Clarkson, E, Marko, Z, *New beginnings for early childhood road safety education in Australia – leading change through policy development* in Proceedings of the 2014 Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing & Education Conference.

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educators. This equips educators to prepare children for the road safety sessions and to embed ongoing road safety education in centres.

For Albert Park Kindergarten's Nominated Supervisor and Health and Safety Officer, Janice Vissaritis, "the Starting Out Safely program has made a big difference to the quality of our road safety education in a way that is truly meaningful for both adults and children". While Albert Park Kindergarten parent, Sarah Hughes, says "I want to support my children to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle. The Road Safety Education program really helps us as a family to achieve that".

The *Starting Out Safely* program also provides best practice policies for the safe transportation of children in cars including the latest advice and resources on the proper use of child car restraints and booster seats, including a recent video featuring the Director of Paediatric Trauma at the Royal Children's Hospital, Dr Warrick Teague.

What: Celebrating 75000 Victorian Children Made Safer through *Starting Out Safely*

When: Monday, 30 October

- 10:00am – 10:40am ThingleToodle road safety education session (NB Minister does not arrive until 10.30am)
- 10:45am children and the Victorian Minister for Roads and Road Safety blow out candles on the celebration cake
- 10.50am – 11.00am photo opportunities with children, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, ThingleToodle and the Professor (reading road safety stories, traffic sign education etc.)

Where: Albert Park Kindergarten, 18 Dundas Place, Albert Park

About Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) and *Starting Out Safely*

ELAA is an independent, peak body representing the voice of early learning service providers and parents. Our vision is *excellence in early learning for every child*. ELAA has delivered the *Starting Out Safely* program on behalf of VicRoads since 2011 and was recently awarded a renewed contract until 2020.

The *Starting Out Safely* program is funded by VicRoads and was first launched in 1989. It has since evolved to become one of the most comprehensive early years road safety education programs in Australia. The program has been developed through evidence based research, in collaboration with early childhood experts. It works with children, parents, carers and early childhood educators to guide children's learning in being and becoming safe, independent road users.

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