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Early learning peak body asks Government to count to five on funding priorities

1. Universal access to funding for two years of (non-compulsory) kindergarten.
2. Greater investment in early learning infrastructure.
3. Better professional development, resources and a new EBA for early learning educators.
4. Measures to increase children's access and participation in kindergarten.
5. Improved safety, wellbeing and mental health support for kindergarten and childcare workers and children.

These are the five key recommendations to the Victorian Government contained in the Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) 2018-19 Budget Submission.

"At its heart, our Budget Submission emphasises the central message that high quality early childhood education is a central ingredient for realising positive futures for our children," said ELAA Interim CEO, Tina Martin.

"While our Submission acknowledges the recent substantial investment by the Andrews Government in early childhood education through the Early Childhood Reform Plan – with \$108.4 million directed to enhancing kindergarten services – there is more needed."

The Budget Submission urges the Victorian Government to build for now and the future by planning for two years of (non-compulsory) preschool for all children. With one in five children developmentally vulnerable, the Submission notes that currently funded programs for three-year-olds only target specific 'at risk' groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or those who have come into contact with child protection services. To address the wider prevalence of developmental vulnerability and to bring Victoria into line with most OECD nations, funding needs to be broadened to give all three-year-old children universal access to a minimum of 15 hours a week of quality early learning.

"A better educated society is both healthier and happier," added Ms Martin. "So we are asking the Victorian Government to advocate for a new National Partnership Agreement on funding early learning which commits to long-term planning and expanding the current funding (in which four-year-old children access 15 hours a week of quality early learning) to children whose parents wish to access a program for three-year-olds."

To support an expansion of funded programs to three-year-olds and to address the anticipated doubling of Victoria's population by 2050, the ELAA submission also calls on the Victorian Government to invest more heavily in early learning infrastructure, particularly in the State's growth corridors.



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

“The \$74 million currently allocated by the Victorian government to build and upgrade kindergartens is a step in the right direction but much more will need to be done,” said Ms Martin. “Vulnerable populations are more likely to reside in growth areas and without sufficient long-term planning; children may be denied the opportunity to participate in kindergarten with significant consequences.”

“Our 2018-19 Budget submission also makes recommendations on how Victoria can improve the quality of its early learning programs through a workforce development strategy; increase access and participation by children and their families; and better support the wellbeing of kindergarten and childcare workers.

“ELAA urges the Victorian Government to continue to grow the investment in early childhood education and care where it counts.”

Read the full ELAA [2018-19 Budget Submission to the Victorian Government](#) .

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