



2 May, 2018

## Vic Budget ticks some boxes but not all

The Andrews Government 2018/19 Budget has ticked three out of five of ELAA's 'priority boxes' for early childhood education and care but has overlooked other priorities that ELAA identified for our sector.

ELAA's 2018/19 Victorian Budget Submission had asked the Government to "count to five" on early learning funding priorities including:

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.

"While funding for Universal access to 15 hours a week of early learning in the year before school is assured for four-year-olds until the end of 2019, our call to extend that funding to universal access for three-year-olds remains unanswered," said ELAA Interim CEO, Tina Martin.

"We do, however, applaud the investment of \$42.9 million toward kindergarten infrastructure – to build new centres and upgrade existing ones – including \$9 million to build three early childhood development facilitates within schools."

ELAA's call for better professional development for early years educators has been partially met with \$8 million allocated to attracting new teachers to the profession (in the form of scholarships) plus more support for educators who wish to progress to a teaching qualification. "While this is welcomed, there is more to be done in terms of attracting, retaining, and rewarding qualified and committed early childhood teachers and educators," Ms Martin said.

The Budget also makes further provision for programs aimed at overcoming barriers to children accessing quality early learning. This includes nearly \$18 million in funding to support language acquisition (a first for Victoria) and program delivery in a language other than English; greater access for Aboriginal families to Maternal Child Health Services (\$4 million); an expansion of the LOOKOUT program (for children in Out of Home care) to kindergartens and funding to meet increased demand for the Early Start Kindergarten Program (\$4 million).

"This funding all contributes to increasing access and participation – we just need more of it," added Ms Martin.

"Sadly, the final item on our 'top five' list of Budget priorities – greater resources to improve safety in early learning services, particularly mental health supports for service employees, and wellbeing programs for staff and children – has not received the priority in the Budget that we had hoped for.

# Media Release



EARLY  
LEARNING  
ASSOCIATION  
AUSTRALIA

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

We will continue to advocate to the Government for greater support in this area.

“The 2018/19 Budget includes some positive steps for early childhood education and care in Victoria but there are some giant strides needed – particularly in the areas of universal access, workforce advancement and supporting wellbeing in the sector.”

**ENDS**

**Media contact: Tina Martin, Interim CEO, ELAA 0409 190 926 or 03 9489 3500**