



Budget Submission

to the Victorian Government
2019-2020



EARLY
LEARNING
ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIA

The voice for parents and service providers

At the threshold of a new era

Victoria is poised on the threshold of a new era for early childhood education. Never before have there been such competing opportunities and risks.

ELAA applauds the commitment of the Andrews State Government to make kindergarten universally available for three-year-olds. ELAA and our members look forward to advising on the expansion which will see kindergarten initially offered for a minimum of 5 hours per week for all Victorian three-year-olds, growing to 15 hours per week within ten years.

ELAA and our members want to see the State government continuing to advocate strongly to the Commonwealth to ensure that two key national agreements are in place:

- a renewed National Partnership agreement which commits to ongoing funding for access to kindergarten for four-year-old children beyond 2019 and establishes a national expansion program to three-year-olds
- a new National Partnership agreement on quality, which reflects the critical role of the National Quality Framework and its role in delivering outcomes for every child.

Regardless of the outcomes of these negotiations, children's futures depend on the Andrews Government commitment to Victoria being a world-leader in the provision of early childhood education.

Attracting a skilled and committed workforce to meet the growing demand in a Victorian (and National) context is a major priority of ELAA's members. ELAA, together with our partners, has started the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement and we will work closely with the Victorian Government to improve remuneration, recognition and status outcomes for teachers and educators in particular.

The expansion of kindergarten in Victorian must be built on a sustainable service system. ELAA has surveyed the health of early years management organisations and found it to be in a critical state. The majority of organisations are uncertain whether they will be still providing early years management in two years' time due to long-standing underfunding. ELAA and its CEO Group have developed a companion document to this submission, *Early Years Management: Achieving a sustainable service system* which identifies the urgent support organisations need to remain viable for the roll-out of three-year-old kindergarten.

Many of ELAA's members provide integrated services which recognise the needs of vulnerable families and children. ELAA urges the Andrews State Government to develop a vision for integrated services to help drive the critical connections and offer a more seamless experience for families.

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David Worland
Chief Executive Officer



Lee Cath
President

About ELAA

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) is a peak body which works in partnership with early learning providers and parents to deliver excellence in learning for every child. Our diverse membership base of over 1,100 service providers includes early years management organisations, independent kindergartens, local governments, long day care services, government and independent schools and out of school hours care programs.

Valued for our advocacy, ELAA also provides support and advice in the areas of governance, human

resources/industrial relations, enterprise bargaining, occupational health and safety and road safety education as well as a professional learning and development and an annual conference. ELAA works closely with Federal, State and Local Governments and collaborates with a diverse range of organisations and peak bodies from across the education and community sectors. Together with our members and partners, ELAA is an influential advocate for excellence in early childhood education for all children.

<https://elaa.org.au/>

Building the future of early education

The opportunities

- The biggest reform of early childhood education in a decade with the roll-out of a minimum of five hours of kindergarten to all Victorian three-year-old children over four years growing to fifteen hours over the next ten years.
- Ensuring equitable access to children experiencing disadvantage.
- Growing the infrastructure to meet current and future demands.
- Removing uncertainty about the Commonwealth commitment to funding of 15 hours of preschool for four-year olds beyond 2019.

The strategies

ELAA and our members strongly support the following strategies to convert the opportunities of this important reform to outcomes:

- engaging the sector in the design and implementation of the reform
- prioritising vulnerable three-year-old children for access to 15 hours of kindergarten to ensure their engagement and the best possible outcomes
- communicating the plan to develop the infrastructure for Victoria, including how it will address aging facilities, changes in demand and local planning applications including for private long day care facilities
- continuing to advocate for a new National Partnership Agreement which commits the Commonwealth to ongoing funding for two years of preschool
- in partnership with the sector, developing and communicating a vision for integrated early years services.

A skilled, supported and valued workforce

The opportunities

- Improve attraction, recruitment and retention of high quality staff in a rapidly growing sector that is of increasing strategic importance to Government, families and the community.

The strategies

ELAA and our members as employers, both large and small, strongly advocate the following strategies for a skilled, supported and valued workforce:

- develop and implement a workforce strategy:
 - plan the growth of the teacher and educator workforce over the next decade
 - value and support educational leadership and build the capacity for instructional support¹
 - fund early years management services to mentor provisionally registered teachers to support them to become fully-registered
 - fund professional development, ensuring a cost-effective focus on quality improvement and capability development
 - measure implementation and use iterative and creative problem solving to better attract and retain staff.
- fund the outcomes of the negotiations for a new enterprise agreement which addresses:
 - the pay disparity between teachers in kindergartens and those in the school system
 - the pay disparity of educators with education support staff in schools
 - the increasing demand for diploma-qualified staff and the difficulty attracting people to that role
 - the gender-inequity of the pay and conditions of the early childhood workforce to deliver multiple benefits for employees and Victorians².

Early years management: Achieving sustainability

The opportunities

Increase funding to address the systemic financial challenges faced by early years management organisations to ensure their sustainability.

Early years management is in crisis:

- 100 percent of early years management (EYM) organisations surveyed by ELAA agree that the annual EYM grant is insufficient (N=24)
- 66 percent consider that without an increase in funding, they could only continue to provide services for less than two years with half of these services (33 percent) estimating they could continue for less than 12 months
- EYM organisations are pessimistic about the future of early years management, ranking on average a 3.38 out of 10 on a scale ranging from very pessimistic (zero) to very optimistic (ten).

The strategies

ELAA and the ELAA CEO Group commend the submission *Early Years Management: Achieving a sustainable service system* to the Victorian Government. The submission, which accompanies this Budget Submission:

- articulates the value of early years management to staff, children, their parents, the community, the Department of Education and Training (DET) and in the implementation of the Victorian education reform agenda
- identifies the issues affecting the sustainability of early years management and the ways services try to address them
- outlines the case for an initial increase and a review of EYM funding to put it onto a sustainable long-term footing
- identifies factors to be considered in the development of a sustainable model of funding of early years management.

It recommends eleven steps to address this crisis to achieve a sustainable early years management service system.

Delivering quality

The opportunities

Permanently embed quality early childhood education to ensure:

- a new National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care
- the regulatory role of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) continues.

The strategies

ELAA and our members advocate the following strategies to maintain and enhance quality early years services:

- the Victorian Government advocates to the Commonwealth for a renewed commitment to the National Quality Framework through a new National Partnership Agreement and for the reinstatement of the funding withdrawn in the 2017/18 budget.
- the Victorian Government maintains the quality vision for Victoria, including Early Childhood Improvement Branches and Department of Education and Training Quality Assessment and Regulation despite the reduced Commonwealth funding for regulation and assessment.
- the Victorian Government advocates to retain ACECQA as a separate entity (and not be absorbed into Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership).



1 Tayler, C 2016 The E4Kids study: Assessing the Effectiveness of Australian early childhood education and care programs: Overview of Findings at 2016 Final Report to the Partner Organisations of the Effective Early Educational Experiences (E4Kids) Study Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne

2 Victorian Government <https://www.vic.gov.au/women/gender-equality/a-victorian-gender-equality-strategy/case-for-change.html> Accessed 11 February 2019