



Vic Budget makes it easier for all children to reap the benefits of early learning

23 May 2023

The Andrews Government Victorian 23–24 Budget reflects its commitment to delivering on the *Best Start, Best Life* kindergarten reform initiatives while demonstrating the Government is listening to calls to improve access, participation and inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The budget includes another \$1.8 billion over five years to continue to key *Best Start, Best Life* initiatives such as free kindergarten, infrastructure development, and workforce building, raising their total current investment in ECEC to \$6.2 billion.

ELAA welcomes the Government's continued commitment to providing children and families access to Early Childhood Education and Care. Investing in infrastructure, equipment and outreach is something ELAA has continued to emphasise to the Government as a priority and we're pleased at the announcement of a further 150 new bush kinder programs, 10 new bilingual kindergartens, 8 new toy libraries, \$5000 grants to all kindergartens for new toys and equipment and improved access to preschool field officers.

"We are especially pleased to see \$18.1 million committed to improving access for children with additional needs including a review of Kindergarten Inclusion Support program," said ELAA Acting CEO, Megan O'Connell.

"We have advocated extensively to government that it takes too much time to get inclusion support, and the support provided doesn't always meet a child's needs.

"We're also pleased to see \$11.2 million allocated to piloting 'wrap around' family services, like speech pathology and maternal child health, in universal settings like early learning and care centres in 23-24."

ELAA also welcomes targets included in the Budget for Aboriginal and Out of Home Care children to be enrolled in kindergarten.

"The Budget sets a 96 percent kindergarten participation rate in the year before school overall. We're pleased that a 96 percent participation target in the year before school has been set for Aboriginal children. We're also pleased to see a further \$140 million committed to reducing Aboriginal over representation in child protection services."

For more commentary on the 23-24 Victorian State Budget arrange an interview with ELAA Acting CEO, Megan O'Connell, by contacting James Gardener at jgardener@ela.org.au or 0413483182.

Media Release



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