

Department of Education and Training

Strategic Plan 2022–26



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Secretary's Message



I am pleased to introduce the Department of Education and Training's Strategic Plan for 2022–26.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of public education in Victoria, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our strategic

vision: "Together we give every Victorian the best learning and development experience, making our state a smarter, fairer and more prosperous place".

Education and training remain critical to Victoria's social and economic recovery as we move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. It is more important than ever that we continue to deliver high-quality programs and services and support our education and training workforces to improve education outcomes for all Victorians.

In January one million children returned safely to school and Victoria's youngest learners started kinder on time and without disruption. Maintaining sustained face-to-face learning allows our schools and early childhood settings to maximise educational, social and wellbeing outcomes after 2 years of disruption.

This year, our universal, subsidised kindergarten program for 3-year-olds marks a major milestone, with the program now available for 5-15 hours in around 2,700 providers across the state. In addition, over the next decade, we will be implementing 3 major new early childhood education initiatives in Victoria. This includes making kinder free across the state from 2023, establishing 50 government-owned and affordable early learning centres, and transitioning the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program to become 'Pre-Prep', a 30 hour per week

play-based learning program. These are exciting reforms. Giving all Victorian children access to 2 years of play-based early learning before school has profound, long-lasting impacts that are felt through their entire education journey and beyond.

In 2021, Victorian schools led the nation in NAPLAN, achieving the highest percentage of students exceeding the national minimum standards. To continue this progress, the department is delivering high-quality programs such as the Tutor Learning Initiative, which has engaged thousands of teaching professionals and supported more than 200,000 students across the state. An on-going focus for the department is the continued efforts to lift numeracy and literacy outcomes for all year levels.

Our updated Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO 2.0) places wellbeing alongside learning as a core outcome for students in Victorian schools. New investments in student mental health programs, including placing mental health practitioners in all government secondary schools, rolling out our Mental Health in Primary Schools Pilot to 100 schools, and creating the new Schools Mental Health Fund, recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, are delivering innovative and significant new responses at the school level. The continued roll out of the disability inclusion reforms are also critical as we work to ensure all students with disability are supported in government schools, so that every student can thrive.

To ensure the best educational outcomes for Victorian students, we need modern, vibrant school facilities. Through the construction of new school buildings, major upgrades, and delivery of maintenance and small capital works programs we are striving to ensure every school community has access to high-quality infrastructure and equipment that supports best practice teaching and a great learning experience.

From 2023, the VCE Vocational Major and Victorian Pathways Certificate will replace the Victorian Certificate or Applied Learning (VCAL). Moving to an integrated senior secondary certificate will give all students the learning opportunities to develop the skills and capabilities needed to succeed in further education, work and life. This is the most significant reform to senior secondary education in Victoria in decades and the department is working with schools to ensure the best possible start to the new certificates in 2023.

Our revitalised skills and training architecture focuses on addressing the complex and evolving needs of industry, business and community, with a vibrant TAFE network at its centre. The establishment of the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery in 2021 has strengthened TAFEs operating as a cohesive network delivering great student outcomes. Continued investment in Free TAFE has seen over 100,000 Victorians enrol in critical workforce areas. In addition the Big Build Apprenticeships and the TAFE Demonstration projects have enabled a record number of apprentices to secure employment and training in key Victorian government infrastructure projects.

Adult Community and Further Education continues to play an important role in enabling delivery of key foundation skills and providing a local access point for learners at the community level. The new Victorian Skills Authority established in 2021 is, through its annual Skills Plan, providing a roadmap

for future skilling requirements to guide investment and priority setting across the vocational education and higher education sectors. It is important that we continue to drive responsive, streamlined and accessible vocational education and higher education sectors so that all Victorians, no matter their background or where they live, can access the skills they need for their future.

The department's 2022–26 Strategic Plan supports our staff, partners and providers across the education and training sectors to be successful and deliver better outcomes. Our department has built strong foundations that enable good decision-making and high-quality public administration.

We have strengthened our capabilities in relation to project management, monitoring and reporting and continue to focus on how we track and measure progress, so we are able to course correct and improve delivery when needed.

I am proud that education and care services, schools and other learning institutions continue to be highly trusted service providers and reliable partners to millions of Victorians. That is why it is so important that we continue to provide safe, stable environments that support both excellence in learning outcomes and happy, healthy learners.

Our Vision

"Together we give every Victorian the best learning and development experience, making our state a smarter, fairer, more prosperous place."

The department is responsible for delivering and regulating statewide learning and development services to approximately one-third of all Victorians, across the early childhood education, school education, and training and skills sectors.

We support Victorians to reach their potential, regardless of their background, postcode or circumstance, and to develop the knowledge, skills

and attributes they need to participate and thrive in a complex economy and society, as well as engage as global citizens.

The goals we set, changes we implement, systems we support and services we offer are all focused on improving outcomes and opportunities for Victorians. We are committed to supporting Victorians to build happy, healthy and rewarding lives.



Our Objectives

The department has 3 core objectives crucial to achieving our vision, that together we give every Victorian the best learning and development experience, making our state a smarter, fairer, more prosperous place.

- **Achievement:** Raise standards of learning and development achieved by Victorians using education and training.

- **Engagement:** Increase the number of Victorians actively participating in education and training.
- **Wellbeing:** Increase the contribution education and training make to quality of life for all Victorians, particularly children and young people.

Our Financial Outlook

The 2022–23 Victorian State Budget Paper 3 sets out the department's output groups and their budgeted costs. For the 2022–23 financial year, the department's output budget totals \$16.5 billion. In addition to this, the 2022–23 State Budget

announced \$1.65 billion in asset initiatives over the next 4 years. This is shown in the tables below, including the current and future funding for the department's new output initiatives until 2025–26.

The Department's output funding	2022-23 (\$m)
Strategy, Review and Regulation	110.9
Early Childhood Education	984.9
School Education – Primary	5,942.9
School Education – Secondary	5,026.9
Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development	2,482.7
Support Services Delivery	440.4
Support for Students with Disabilities	1,522.3
Total	16,510.9

The department's 2022–23 output initiatives	2022-23 (\$m)	2023-24 (\$m)	2024-25 (\$m)	2025-26 (\$m)
Early Childhood Education				
Building inclusive kindergartens	2.9	5.8	3.2	-
Continuing early intervention for vulnerable children	4.5	5.3	5.2	3.6
Continuing the early childhood language program	2.7	2.8	-	-
Delivering 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten	8.4	15.2	16.7	10.6
Expanding the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6
Improving outcomes for children with disability	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4
Improving outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children	1.0	2.0	1.0	-
Kinder Kits for three year old kinder	7.1	7.6	-	-
Maintaining universal access to four year old kindergarten	10.6	21.6	21.8	22.0
Strengthening Victoria's interface with the National Disability Insurance Scheme	2.3	2.9	-	-
School Education				
Active Schools	11.2	9.6	-	-
Building equity and excellence for rural and regional students	5.2	5.7	8.7	9.1
Connected Learners – cyber safe and secure learners	3.7	-	-	-
Continuation of the Student Excellence Program	10.5	15.1	7.5	3.9
Digital education – Critical IT supporting every student	25.2	25.7	26.2	26.7
Engaging students in learning – The Geelong Project, Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement and Project REAL	0.6	2.3	1.5	-
English as an Additional Language	11.6	11.9	-	-
Enhanced Navigator Program	6.7	11.1	11.4	7.7
Essential maintenance and compliance	19.0	32.8	32.8	32.8
Excellence in vocational and applied learning	18.5	33.1	23.3	13.0
Extension of the Primary Mathematics and Science Specialists initiative	4.6	8.3	4.3	-
Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships for all Victorian government school students	10.9	18.7	19.4	20.3
Improved vocational and applied learning pathways	15.8	12.4	4.5	1.3

The department's 2022–23 output initiatives	2022-23 (\$m)	2023-24 (\$m)	2024-25 (\$m)	2025-26 (\$m)
Improving teaching quality	69.5	194.6	254.5	259.6
Lifting student literacy and numeracy outcomes	27.1	36.6	33.0	34.4
New schools construction	-	15.1	19.4	19.8
Next Generation Victorian Curriculum F-10	1.4	0.8	0.5	-
Out of field teaching	1.8	3.2	3.6	1.5
Relocatable Buildings Program	8.1	2.9	3.0	3.0
Respectful and safe school communities	4.8	4.2	1.9	1.5
School enrolment-based funding	30.1	31.3	32.6	33.9
School upgrades: growth for 2025	-	-	0.9	1.8
Software for connected learners	3.6	8.5	9.7	9.7
Student health and wellbeing – school nursing and student support services	9.0	0.8	0.8	0.8
Sustaining student mental health services for schools	9.0	12.5	9.9	10.0
Targeted initiatives to attract more teachers	21.9	14.8	15.1	7.1
Targeted investment to improve educational outcomes in youth justice	5.6	9.3	9.4	6.0
Universal access to high-quality VET for government school students	9.8	24.2	27.3	24.8
Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) delivery on the Northern Hemisphere timetable	1.4	1.5	-	-
Support for Students with Disabilities				
Students with disabilities transport program	30.7	-	-	-
Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development				
A coordinated and efficient TAFE system	39.5	25.9	2.1	-
Adding Auslan courses to the Free TAFE course list	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Apprenticeship Support Officers	5.9	6.1	-	-
Skills Solutions Partnerships	0.2	0.2	-	-
TAFE inclusion	0.4	0.4	-	-
Total output initiatives	468.0	648.4	617.2	571.2

The Department's asset initiatives	2022-23 (\$m)	2023-24 (\$m)	2024-25 (\$m)	2025-26 (\$m)	TEI (\$m)
Early Childhood Education					
Delivering 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten	4.3	-	-	-	4.3
School Education					
Essential maintenance and compliance	2.4	84.9	31.2	1.5	120.0
Land acquisition for new schools	99.7	118.0	19.0	-	236.7
Minor Capital Works Fund	12.5	27.2	2.1	-	41.8
New schools construction	247.9	249.8	28.0	1.4	527.2
Relocatable Buildings Program	92.2	-	-	-	92.2
School upgrades	8.0	99.5	119.6	6.6	234.0
School upgrades: growth for 2025	2.0	17.4	34.6	2.1	56.4
Support for Students with Disabilities					
Accessible Buildings Program	5.0	5.0	-	-	10.0
Special school upgrades	7.7	125.6	181.7	10.4	326.0
Total asset initiatives	481.7	727.5	416.2	22.1	1,648.5



How We Measure Our Success

Reporting progress

The department uses a set of indicators and measures to evaluate outcomes and assess how well we are meeting our objectives. Through monitoring and measuring our performance, we are better able to understand and demonstrate the impact we are having on the educational outcomes in the Victorian community.

The department's indicators are published in the 2022–23 Victorian State Budget Paper 3¹. The department reports progress across our outcome performance measures in the Annual Report, available on the department's website². The Annual Report also provides a summary of the progress in implementing each of the initiatives outlined in this strategic plan.

Evaluation

Evaluation is fundamental to continuous improvement and for building a solid evidence base that enables policies and programs to meet the needs of all Victorians. The department continues to strengthen its evaluation culture by undertaking regular reviews that inform policy, program and service improvements.



¹ <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/state-budget/2022-23-state-budget>

² <https://www.vic.gov.au/governance-and-reporting-department-education-and-training>

Our Department

The department's services

Early childhood	School education	Training and skills and Higher Education
Birth to 8 More than 400,000 children and families	5 to 18 More than 1,014,200 students	15 to 65+ More than 328,800 government-subsidised enrolments in Vocational Education and Training (VET)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years learning and development including early childhood education and care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary education • Secondary education • Special education • Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and Further Education (TAFE) • Dual-sector Universities • Private registered training providers • Learn Locals

We have a diverse range of public, private and not-for-profit providers serving Victorians and international students of all ages:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 4,590 approved education and care services providing long day care, kindergarten, outside-school-hours care, and family day care • Approximately 270 licensed children's services providing limited-hour services such as occasional care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,557 government schools • 729 non-government schools (498 Catholic schools and 231 independent schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 TAFE institutes • 10 universities operating under State legislation (four of which are dual-sector that also provide VET) • 269 government-contracted registered training organisations, including community-based, not-for-profit, industry-based and private organisations • 263 Learn Local organisations, which are community owned not-for-profit organisations and Adult Education Institutions, registered with the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) to deliver pre-accredited training
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Our Organisational Approach

Current operating environment

The department is operating in a challenging and complex environment as it supports Victoria's economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The flexibility and agility of the Victorian school education system has been well demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Against a backdrop of disruption and uncertainty, every level of the Victorian education system, demonstrated extraordinary ability to continuously adapt and innovate to ensure the continuous delivery of student learning and wellbeing supports. The department is using the lessons learnt from this period to embed agility into its services and modernise the way it works. As part of these improvements, the department is adopting the best elements of remote and innovative technology.

The importance of immediate communications between the department and education settings has been critical through the pandemic. We are engaging more directly with more of our stakeholders and continue to share knowledge and engage openly to support effective service operations. The ability to connect more efficiently and effectively will be a feature of our education system going forward.

The department allocates and deploys public resources to support outcomes for Victorian learners. With a clear focus on delivery, we have embedded greater oversight, reporting and monitoring of the delivery of major initiatives and key strategies. This maximises our ability to implement reforms and deliver improved outcomes for all learners.

The department is committed to supporting safe and high-quality front-line service delivery to nurture a community of lifelong learners, supporting our education and training workforces and delivering on the Government's commitment to making Victoria the Education State.

Our Stories: Keeping our schools and early childhood services safe in 2022

As students, staff and families across Victoria prepared for the beginning of the 2022 school year, the department played a key role in rolling out a full suite of COVID-safe measures to protect our community and minimise disruption to learning. This involved supporting access to COVID-19 vaccinations for school communities and providing 80 million free Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) through schools and early childhood services for use by all children, students and staff.

Improving ventilation was a key measure to slow the spread of the virus around schools and early childhood services, particularly in high-risk areas like staff rooms, music rooms, indoor canteens and other high traffic areas. To do this, the department arranged the delivery of 51,000 air purification devices to government and low-fee non-government schools ahead of the first day of Term 1. Grants of up to \$25,000 were also available to schools to manage construction and installation of shade sails. More than 1,800 schools applied for a Shade Sail Grant which facilitated safe outdoor learning.

Not-for-profit sessional and long day care providers offering a funded three or four- year-old kindergarten program were eligible for grants of \$4,500 in 2021 and \$4,000 in 2022 to support ventilation and air purification measures.



Challenges

Adaptation action plan

With the potential for other disruptions including extreme weather and emergency situations, our services need to be responsive, adaptable and flexible. Climate change means that we have more very hot days and less rain. The bushfire season is longer than it used to be, and when big rains come, they are more intense and may cause flooding.

The [Adaptation Action Plan 2022–26](#) for the education and training sectors reflects the department's priorities, as outlined in the Climate Change Act 2017 and the Victorian Climate Change Strategy. The plan outlines risks and opportunities within the system in relation to climate change and new measures to build the system's resilience. There are 22 actions in the department's plan including:

- developing a policy on environmental sustainability in schools
- incorporating region-based climate adaptation tools and resources (such as flood overlays, and temperature and rainfall projections) when selecting sites for new education facilities
- understanding skills issues arising from both the impacts of climate change, the requirement to achieve net-zero carbon economy by 2050, and providing recommendations to the vocational training sector

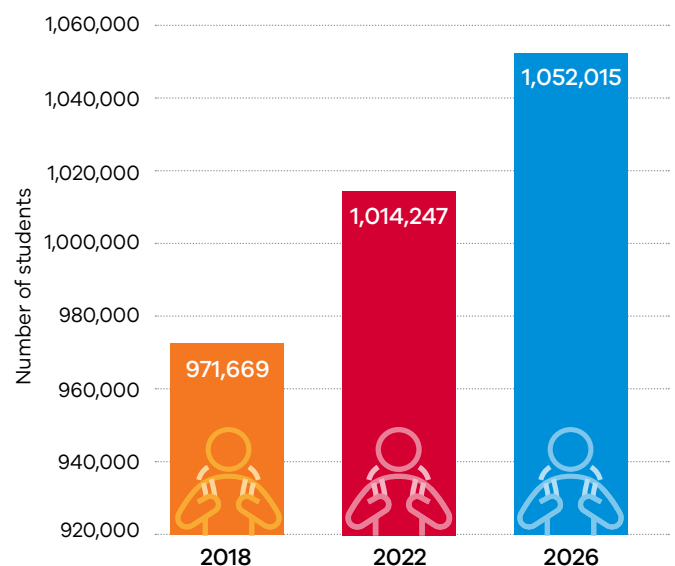


- convening a diverse group of students to advise on the most engaging learning and teaching resources relating to climate change, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and communicating these to schools and TAFEs
- exploring ways to support early childhood education providers to build organisational resilience and adapt activities to the impacts of climate change on wellbeing and service delivery.

Future demand

Victoria's population growth has slowed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, long term population growth remains a significant challenge for the department. By 2026, enrolments in early childhood services are predicted to grow to more than 150,500, while primary school and secondary school enrolments will grow to about 559,000 and 493,000 respectively³. The department is carefully monitoring changes in population forecasts and government sector market share to inform its strategic planning.

School enrolment growth 2018 – 2026



³ <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/careers/teacher-supply-and-demand-report-2020.pdf>

Our Education State reforms are expanding the services the department is offering, while also supporting a greater proportion of Victoria's population. The initiatives and programs outlined in this plan require localised and tailored approaches. Changes in the movement and spread of learners affects demand at a local level. The department continues to tailor our response to ensure every Victorian has access to high-quality education services.

The department's Asset Strategy 2021–31 develops and maintains a high performing asset base that supports improved education and development outcomes. By targeting our investment, we improve asset planning, acquisition, operation and maintenance and disposal across the early childhood, schools and higher education and training and skills sectors. The strategy is consistent with best practices and the Victorian Government's Asset Management Accountability Framework. It has taken the population growth into account to ensure we have an asset base that can meet the projected demand.

Workforce

Building our workforce capability and supporting teacher and educator supply is essential to improving the quality of early childhood, school education and VET.

Victoria's changing population is placing additional demands on our services and workforces, with specific planning and support required for staff across different education settings and locations. By 2026, Victoria is projected to require 103,410 teachers across the early childhood education, primary school and secondary school settings⁴.

Supply in regional areas remains a particular challenge. Government schools in some locations continue to experience recruitment challenges for specific teaching roles, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics, languages and special education. The roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is likely to impact workforce capacity in the early childhood workforce, particularly in some regional locations.

Early childhood workforce

The department has a range of workforce attraction and retention initiatives to enable the expansion and rollout of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program. To make the program a

Our Stories: Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: making a difference

The rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is creating 6,000 new teaching jobs, for those committed to providing Victorian children the best start in life.

Andrew Ross was frustrated as an IT professional when a friend suggested that he consider teaching because of his ability to explain technical things to other people. After investigating his options, Andrew decided early childhood teaching was his passion.

'Not only is learning in a kindergarten guided by a child's own interests and curiosity, I quickly discovered that this was where I could have the greatest impact,' Andrew said.

Having initially completed a Bachelor of Computer Science, Andrew was eligible to undertake the Graduate Diploma in Education (Early Childhood) at RMIT University. After gaining his Diploma in Education, Andrew landed a job at Leongatha Children's Centre. The mentoring experience at Leongatha led Andrew to proceed in the early childhood industry and become a three-year-old kindergarten teacher.

Andrew identifies the variability of each day as the most enjoyable element of teaching three-year-old children.

'Every day is different. The young children are developing all the time and their interests are changing,' Andrew said.

He strongly encourages other people to consider teaching kindergarten. *"To know that you are making a difference to individual children, families and eventually to society is very satisfying".*

success an additional 4,000 teacher and 2,000 qualified educator positions will be created by 2029.

The department continues to work with the Early Childhood sector to build awareness of the existing initiatives and identify new actions and partnerships across the sector. This includes providing scholarships for aspiring kindergarten teachers, accelerated initial teacher education, employment incentives and professional development support.

⁴ <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/careers/teacher-supply-and-demand-report-2020.pdf>

Schools workforce

The department is committed to improving the capability, quantity and wellbeing of its school teaching workforce.

To support the growing demand for teachers in schools, the department is lifting the number of graduates and career changers entering the teaching profession through the Innovative Initial Teacher Education pathways, and by incentivising teachers to move to rural and regional schools.

The department also continues to support existing teachers to train in areas of subject demand such as mathematics and science. The Primary Mathematics and Science Specialist program is training an additional 100 government primary teachers as mathematics specialists by 2025. A quarter of these positions will be filled in rural and regional areas.

The Excellence in Teacher Education Reforms are attracting a diverse range of high-quality teaching candidates, raising the status and entry standards and ensuring strong and effective pathways into the teaching profession. Graduate teachers continue to be supported through induction and mentoring, the Graduate Teacher Conferences, the Graduate Learning Series, and the Effective Mentoring Program. The Career Start pilot is providing support to graduate teachers in the

first two years of their careers. Career Start provides time-release, professional development opportunities and a range of additional supports to graduate teachers and their mentors to accelerate graduate teaching and learning.

Quality teaching means giving our teachers opportunities to focus on teaching activities that provide the greatest benefit for students. In line with the 2022 Victorian Government Schools Agreement, the department is reducing the maximum face to face teaching by 1.5 hours over the next 2 years by funding an additional 2,000 teachers in government schools. This enables teachers to spend more time collaborating with their peers, planning lessons based on individual student needs and participating in professional learning and development activities.

In addition, the department has established a new academy, The Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, to provide advanced professional learning for Victorian teachers and educational leaders.

The Victorian Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) initiative takes an evidence-based approach to improving student outcomes based on sharing best teaching practices. PLCs support teachers to evaluate and monitor the impact of their teaching by using the FISO 2.0 Improvement Cycle to guide inquiry and feedback on student



learning. PLCs aim to systematise teacher collaboration, providing opportunities for teachers to work together in small teams focused on cohorts or subject areas to investigate the best ways to teach individual students and content. Every Victorian government school receives intensive implementation support to implement PLCs. This includes a comprehensive professional learning program, expert advice from regionally based teams, and peer-to-peer support from PLC Link Schools.

Vocational education and training workforce

As we introduce a new core vocational offering across senior secondary schools, we make sure that every senior secondary student can access quality vocational and applied learning. To strengthen the teaching workforce in these new pathways, a new funded to study program to attract 400 extra VET trainers is being introduced, along with professional development for up to 1,900 teachers and increased funding for jobs, skills and pathways coordinators in schools.

There are approximately 4,100 teaching staff in TAFEs across Victoria. The TAFE teacher scholarships program supports industry experts to retrain as TAFE teachers so they can bring years of valuable experience into the classrooms. In addition, the TAFE Teacher Incentive Program provides up to 200 study assistance scholarships valued at \$10,000 each, to enhance the TAFE teaching workforce amid growing student enrolments. The program was launched in late 2021, with 157 skilled workers signing-up across a variety of in demand industries, including health and community services, construction and electrotechnology.



How We Achieve Our Objectives

Our structure, processes and leadership support us to deliver the best possible outcomes for Victorians. To achieve our objectives in early childhood, schools, higher education and skills sectors we are maintaining our focus on a high-performance culture, strong accountability and leadership.

Early childhood

There is strong evidence that the period from birth to 5 years of age is vital for children's development and has a positive impact on their future outcomes. Access to high-quality early childhood services is central to giving every Victorian child the best start in life.

In an Australian first, Victoria is introducing kindergarten programs for 3-year-olds, which will be free for families at participating services from 2023. This gives children access to 2 years of play-based early learning before school.

The reform is being implemented through a staged roll-out. From 2022, all Victorian 3-year-olds have access to at least 5 hours of funded kindergarten. From 2023, flexible hours will be introduced and the hours will grow to 15 hours by 2029.

Supporting the continued development of the kindergarten sector is critical to the rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. This includes working with local government and community-based Early Years Managers to drive reform and support access and quality.

Over the next decade, Four-Year-Old Kinder will transition to Pre-Prep, which will increase to a universal 30-hour per week program of play-based learning by 2032. Pre-Prep will be delivered through kindergartens and long day care centres. It gives 4-year-old children the opportunity to access to free, high-quality early education, socialise and learn through play. From 2023, both Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep will be free for Victorian families at participating services.

Our Stories: Fun-filled kinder kits for advancing 3-year-old learning

As part of the statewide rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, the department has provided all children enrolled in the program with a fun-filled kinder kit.

The kinder kits are filled with a collection of bright and engaging resources such as books, toys and activities that suit the developmental needs of 3-year-old children. The resources are selected by a panel of early childhood education experts and are designed to encourage children to continue learning at home, and to help parents support their child to thrive in kindergarten. The activities teach children problem-solving, cooperation and collaboration — all skills that give children the best start in life.

'They are not just one-way activities, they are very open ended and can be anything they want them to be, in their own imaginative world,' Josette Nunn, kindergarten teacher and Early Childhood Teacher of the Year 2020 said.

Josette, who was a member of the panel of experts, also explained what she looked for when recommending items to include in the kinder kits.

'I looked at whether they were Victorian and if they came from recycled products or materials and how durable the materials would be,' she said. 'It was a real privilege to help put these kinder kits together. There were 150 things to choose from. What I and other panel members did was went through every item and made a shortlist of what I thought was suitable from the eyes of a Kinder teacher.'

'When you open that little box, you can just see children's eyes just start to light up. That's what I love about it.'



By 2029, there will be about 785 new kindergartens built and 170 existing services expanded. This is being facilitated through the Building Blocks investment program that includes funding to support the development of kindergartens on school sites, grants for new and existing providers, and a new modular kindergarten program.

In addition, the department will build 50 government-owned integrated early learning centres. These will be located in areas with the greatest unmet demand, with the first centres to open from 2025. Where possible, the centres will be co-located with schools, and alongside hospitals, TAFEs and major employers to create convenient access for working parents.

As the early childhood sector continues to expand, the department is increasing its focus on kindergarten participation and engagement for all children across the State. This includes supporting the transition to school for vulnerable and disadvantaged children known to Child Protection, children in out of home care and refugee and asylum seeker children. Key initiatives supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children include School Readiness Funding, Early Start Kindergarten, expanded Early Childhood LOOKOUT and Access to Early Learning programs.

The department also provides a range of supports for culturally and linguistically diverse families. This includes the Early Years Program delivered by Foundation House for children from a refugee background and time-limited outreach worker programs.

Another major reform in Early Childhood Education is the introduction of the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS). Led by the department, the CISS is a Whole of Victorian Government (WoVG) initiative, enabling authorised organisations to share information to improve the wellbeing and safety of children. The CISS is underpinned by Child Link, a digital register that integrates key information, drawn from existing government and children's service systems. Through Child Link, key professionals have the consolidated information they need to collaborate with other child and family services professionals to support individual children's wellbeing and safety.

The CISS includes training prescribed workforces, acquitting recommendations made in its 2-year review, and rolling out a CISS Sector Grants Program and place-based initiatives by 2025.

Schools

The department is focused on delivering a high quality, contemporary school system that improves outcomes for every student across Victoria, preparing them for the opportunities and challenges of the modern world. Our work is centred around 4 key pillars:

- **Evidence-based teaching and learning** – delivering an evidence-based approach to school improvement, data-driven professional collaboration for teachers and needs-based resources to support students to achieve excellence and equity.
- **Student inclusion, health and wellbeing** – providing schools with the right support and structures to focus on each and every student, including their health and wellbeing.
- **Excellence in senior secondary** – lifting the quality, perception and access to high-quality applied learning and vocational programs.
- **Modern, vibrant school facilities** – working to ensure every school community has access to high-quality infrastructure and equipment to support best practice teaching and a great learning experience for students.

Evidence-based teaching and learning

In the 2021 NAPLAN tests, Victoria achieved the highest percentage of students achieving above the national minimum standards. This result was all the more welcome given the challenges students and teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The department remains committed to further improving literacy and numeracy through a range of programs and supports. The Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy Support (MYLNS) initiative provides significant individualised support to secondary students who are at risk of finishing school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need for work or further education and training. MYLNS also lifts the capability of secondary school educators by sharing differentiated teaching in literacy and numeracy.

To further improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes, the department introduced the Tutor Learning Initiative in 2021, engaging qualified tutors to provide targeted learning support for students who struggled during remote and flexible learning. The initiative has employed

thousands of teachers as tutors and provided small group tutoring intervention to approximately 200,000 students across all school sectors. With the extension of the Tutor Learning Initiative in 2022, the department continues to address the lingering impact of the global pandemic on student learning.

The Differentiated Support for School Improvement initiative assists identified schools with complex challenges by tailoring specific supports to build teacher and leadership capacity. This work enables all schools to continue to improve, regardless of their starting point.

Our Stories: Overcoming the odds with strong NAPLAN results

Victorian primary and secondary students achieved the State's best ever reading and numeracy NAPLAN results in 2021, maintaining Victoria's ranking as Australia's top performing state or territory. It is especially positive given the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here is how Victorian school students excelled in the 2021 NAPLAN tests:

- Year 3 students are top of the class in Reading, Numeracy, and Grammar and Punctuation, while Year 5s lead the nation in Reading, Numeracy, Writing, and Grammar and Punctuation.
- Year 7 students improved in Reading, Writing and Spelling compared to 2019 – achieving the highest scores of any state or territory in Reading and Numeracy.
- Year 9 students topped the nation in Spelling.
- In secondary schools, more students achieved the top two bands of Reading compared to 2019 and there are fewer students in the bottom two bands.

A mix of resilience and hard work of Victorian educators, students and families and support provided by the Victorian Government, underpinned the remarkable result.

Student inclusion, health and wellbeing

As a department, we remain committed to enabling all students to achieve, engage and be happy, healthy and resilient. Schools play a key role in supporting all students to thrive by providing positive and inclusive learning environments.

Our updated Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO 2.0) places wellbeing alongside learning as a core outcome for students in Victorian government schools, elevating the focus on wellbeing across the system.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System made recommendations to mental health and wellbeing treatment, care, and support, including a focus on early intervention. In response a School Mental Health Fund has been established, accompanied with a menu of evidence-based programs and initiatives designed to give schools confidence in identifying programs, staff and resources that improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes for their students.

The Mental Health Practitioners initiative enables every government secondary school campus to recruit a suitably qualified, school-based mental health practitioner. The initiative includes direct counselling support for students and other early intervention services, coordination of supports for students with critical and complex needs, and the provision of professional support for mental health practitioners.

The Mental Health in Primary Schools program embeds a mental health and wellbeing coordinator within schools to help identify and manage emerging mental health issues in students and provide connections between education, social and health services. The program is expanding from 100 Pilot schools in 2022 to all government and low-fee non-government primary schools by 2026.

Disability Inclusion is a new approach for supporting students with disability in Victorian government schools. The approach is underpinned by a new funding and support model that provides additional investment for students with disability. A Disability Inclusion Profile will be used to help schools identify and respond to the needs of students with disability. This approach continues

to build on previous 'inclusion for all' initiatives that improved the capability of education workforces to provide inclusive education. The department's design of new schools and upgrades also ensure that facilities support a learning environment that does not disadvantage children with learning or physical disabilities.

Koorie Victorians can harness the full benefits of the Education State reforms through the [Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–26](#). This work underpins Victoria's strong and steadfast commitment to close the gap in educational outcomes between Koorie and non-Koorie Victorians. The department is achieving this commitment by continuing the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy program, expanding the Koorie Pre School Assistants program to 4 new locations, and continuing the Koorie Families as First Educators and Koorie Engagement Support Officer programs.

In addition, to prepare the education system for Self-Determination and deliver improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, the department is supporting Victorian Aboriginal Language Learning, extending the Speaking Out Against Racism program, and establishing a new Aboriginal language TAFE Cert IV to support more Aboriginal people to undertake a career as a teacher.

Excellence in senior secondary

We are reforming senior secondary school to build the aspirations and skills of young people in Victoria, set them up for future careers, and meet the needs of the modern economy. The department, in partnership with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), is implementing the recommendations of the Review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling. This includes introducing the new VCE Vocational Major and the new Victorian Pathways Certificate in 2023.

Alongside the changes to the certificate structure, the successful Head Start program will be expanded to every government school in the state. This gives all students the opportunity to do an apprenticeship or traineeship in an in-demand sector while completing their schooling. This will be complemented by improved student access to a core offering of VET certificates across all government schools. A revised funding model will reduce complexity and better reflect the cost of delivery of VET in schools.



Modern, vibrant school facilities

The department continues to deliver its substantial school infrastructure program through investments in new schools, significant upgrades and modernisation projects. This builds on the Victorian Government's commitment to open 100 schools by 2026. To date, 48 schools have opened between 2019 and 2022, and a further 13 and 14 will open in 2023 and 2024 respectively. In addition, the department is acquiring land for existing school site extensions and 15 future schools, including 11 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and 1 specialist school.

The department protects student safety through the provision of safe and fit-for-purpose education services and facilities. To achieve this, the department is delivering major upgrades of existing schools and conducting essential maintenance and compliance activities. This includes 67 upgrade and modernisation projects that were funded as part of the 2022–23 State Budget to improve the condition of schools across Victoria.

In addition, to keep our students safe as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, the department is improving ventilation in schools to slow the virus' spread. This includes developing relevant guidance and advice, providing air purifiers and establishing shade sail installation grants to maximise the use of outdoor-learning areas for government school and low-fee-paying-non-government schools.

There are 8 education plans that enable the integration of service planning across early childhood, school and post compulsory education by bringing together community-based investments. The plans in Bayswater, Bendigo, Flemington, Footscray, Frankston North, Lilydale/Upper Yarra, Oakleigh and Shepparton are designed to accelerate the impact of improvement initiatives and leverage collective responsibility for transforming education in a specific community.

Our Stories: **Wuran Senior Campus – Transforming learning through innovative design**

The new Wuran Senior campus is transforming senior secondary learning and inspiring students to be innovators while building their 21st-century skills. Shared between Collingwood College and Fitzroy High School, the campus was designed with senior students in mind. The architects have used ideas more common in university and workplace settings. This is a Victorian-first and puts the Wuran Senior Campus at the forefront of Australian school design.

Flexible and adaptable spaces connect indoor, outdoor, and specialist precincts. This interdisciplinary approach is leading-edge and builds community connections. The large variety of learning environments allows all students to find spaces where they feel comfortable.

The campus explores authentic and appropriate ways to acknowledge and embed First Nations history, heritage and culture in the campus and pays respect to the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people and their connection to Country. Installations that feature First Nations history and culture were produced in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage

Aboriginal Corporation. The First Nations interpretive designs featured throughout the campus are rare examples in public spaces of interpretive storytelling about Victoria's contested and difficult histories.



Higher Education And Skills

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education, skills and training are key to the State's economic, social and health recovery. Employers are looking for people with the right skills. Government organisations need workers to support major infrastructure projects and expansions in social services to deliver benefits for all Victorians. These challenges require a skills and training landscape that adapts to the changing needs of students, employers and the Victorian community.

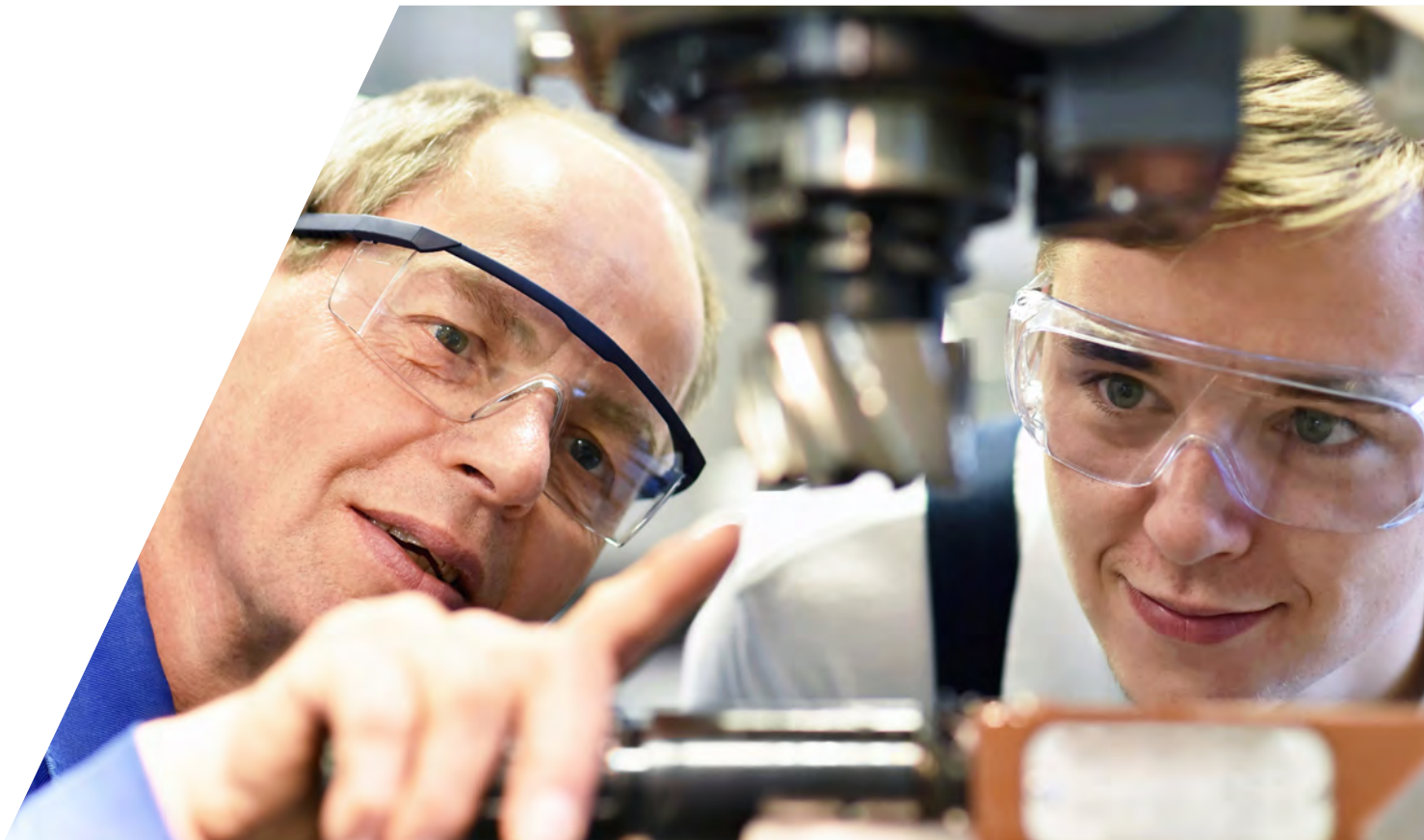
To meet these challenges, the department is changing the way VET providers, industry groups, unions, local community organisations, Learn Locals, universities and government connect to create a landscape that is easier to navigate for employers, workers and local communities.

The Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy Review was presented to the Victorian Government in 2020. In response, the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) has been established to plan future skills to support Victoria's industries and build career opportunities for Victorians through skilling

opportunities. In planning Victoria's future skills, the VSA develops an annual [Victorian Skills Plan](#). The Victorian Skills Plan is a new approach that provides a 'skills roadmap' that connects industry, learner and community insights and evidence to the provision of training and skills services across Victoria. The Victorian Skills Plan identifies actions and the further work required to build a robust skills base and provides detailed insights to revise and develop new national qualifications.

The VSA also facilitates skills innovation and develops strategies to enhance teaching quality across vocational education. An Advisory Board also guides its work.

TAFEs remain critical to Victoria's training and skills sector. These organisations have underpinned the economy through education and training for decades, helping individuals contribute to their local communities. The Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery (OTCD), together with the VSA makes our skills system easier to navigate and creates clear, effective structures to plan for and respond to skill demand.



The OTCD drives collaboration across the TAFE network and helps TAFEs share services, enhance quality, and better meet the training needs of students, employers and communities. TAFEs are being supported to sustainably transition to the new funding model announced in late 2021 and continue the practical placements for TAFE students. In addition, we are strengthening the OTCD's capabilities and resources to deliver the agreed TAFE network priorities.

TAFEs are central to the Big Build Apprenticeships program. The Big Build Apprenticeship program enhances the impact of the Major Projects Skills Guarantee, supporting the employment and training of up to 1,500 apprentices and trainees each year and secures a pipeline of skilled workers in critical areas. This approach leverages group training organisations' and Victoria's infrastructure program to create high-quality skills pathways for apprentices and trainees on major government infrastructure projects, including for under-represented and disadvantaged cohorts. The Big Build Apprenticeships program also includes new skills and jobs centres and on-site support to provide workers with skills advice and address project-specific training needs.

Similarly, TAFE Demonstration Projects, such as the North-East Link, New Footscray Hospital and Warrnambool Learning and Library Hub address skills and job needs through policy coordination and information sharing.

The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund supports Victorian universities by contributing to capital works, applied research, and research infrastructure projects. To improve benefits for all Victorians, the Victorian Government and the 10 universities operating under State legislation have signed partnership agreements that outline their shared objectives and principles for achieving joint benefits. This includes achieving a stronger alignment between education pathways and industry demand, where the Victorian Government is a significant employer.

Our Stories: Improving lives through learn locals

Omer Ntunzwenimana arrived from Burundi (located in eastern Africa) in 2018 as a refugee. Upon arrival in Australia he had no family and did not feel confident in his English language skills.

In January 2020, Omer started attending the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council Learn Local Conversation English and Reading Café class. The weekly class gave Omer the opportunity to practice his English by talking to volunteers in 10-minute rotations.

'The Conversation English and Reading Café class was helpful for me in having confidence to speak English and build my vocabulary,' Omer explained.

Omer surprised his trainers by quickly developing from a shy learner with low confidence in his English-speaking skills to a confident speaker and rapidly improving reader. His improved English skills gave Omer the confidence to progress in his education by studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in sociology at La Trobe University.

His main goal is to help people and he proudly talks about what he would like to do when he finishes his studies.

'I am thinking about the poverty, the people who use drugs and alcohol, the people in conflicts which put many countries in war, and about working with refugees,' Omer said.

'Now, my dream is to become a peacemaker, and I am learning to find which things can be fixed to help establish peace.'

In recognition of his hard work, Omer received The Ro Allen Award – Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (skills for study and life) at the Learn Local Awards on 10 December 2021.

Our People

The department's Victorian Public Service (VPS) People Strategy 2021–24 focuses on 4 areas that have the most impact on its delivery and performance. These are Connected Culture, Purposeful Leadership, Enabled and Capable, and Inclusive Organisation. These focus areas guide our building of existing workforce capabilities and support staff to do high-quality work in an inclusive, safe and respectful workplace. An annual workplan contains actions in each focus area, that are aligned to the department's organisational people initiatives, WoVG initiatives and key workforce reforms.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the department has changed how we work and where we work from. Hybrid working – where employee flexibility is encouraged, and staff work both in offices and remotely – is now a permanent feature of the department's operations. To support the ongoing hybrid working model, the department is implementing a Hybrid Roadmap that includes tangible actions to improve its hybrid working infrastructure, culture and employee experience. These actions focus on:

- driving paperless and digitalised operations
- building capabilities and behaviours critical for hybrid work
- implementing better practice models for stakeholder engagement and professional learning.

The Gender Equality Action Plan promotes workplace gender equality in line with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. The Plan addresses gendered structural and cultural inequalities and ensures a gender equitable, safe, inclusive and respectful workplace for all staff. The department has a range of programs and initiatives in place to support workplace gender equality, including the department's VPS People Strategy 2021–24.

The department also remains committed to school and corporate staff wellbeing. The Safe and Well in Education Strategy assists all departmental employees to understand their health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities, responsibilities and the supports available to acquit these. It builds stronger mental health and wellbeing by creating a shared culture of responsibility and support. The Strategy simplifies the management of health and safety compliance and provides expert advice and hands-on support to prevent and respond to emerging risks. By implementing the Strategy, the department is creating and maintaining an environment where safety and wellbeing are central to how we learn and work.



