

Department of Education and Training

Strategic Plan 2021-25



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Secretary's Message



I am pleased to introduce the Department's Strategic Plan for 2021–25. Delivering the Government's education and training reforms while sustaining and improving high-quality programs and services are more important

than ever, as we continue building a system that improves the outcomes for every learner.

Education and training are critical to Victoria's economic and social recovery, given the challenges presented to Victoria by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The next four years focuses our efforts on a clear delivery imperative. The priorities and programs outlined in this plan support Victoria's economic and social recovery, and continues our progress of the ambitious Education State reforms.

Achieving the best learning and development outcomes for all learners remains at the heart of the Education State. We know that investment in quality early learning services is one of the most effective ways to give children the best start in life. Our priorities include the rollout of universal funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and ensuring our most vulnerable children are engaged. Delivering these programs supports all Victorian children to have access to two years of play-based early learning before school. The continued rollout of School Readiness Funding enables early childhood service providers and educators across the State to respond to the needs of children, who are experiencing educational disadvantage.

The Education State reforms mean that we look to the future with a school system that is centred around evidence-based teaching and learning; student inclusion and wellbeing; and modern, vibrant school facilities. The 2020–21 and 2021–22 State Budgets have provided additional investment to support key reforms, such as:

- supporting students whose learning was most disrupted during 2020 by engaging over 5,600 teaching professionals through the Tutor Learning Initiative
- changing the way students with disabilities are supported in government schools, to ensure every student at every ability can thrive at school and in life. Disability Inclusion introduces a new school-level funding allocation to deliver classroom and school-wide adjustments, increases access to professional learning and scholarships for school staff and evidence-based resources. It includes extra on-the-ground support in schools, with new facilitator roles bringing specialist expertise and knowledge into classrooms, supporting students and families to work together to deliver positive outcomes for every student
- dedicated mental health funding to ensure that all schools have access to a suite of mental health interventions and supports at both the primary and secondary level

- senior secondary reforms that create a stronger and more flexible education system and ensure that the choice of high-quality vocational and applied learning is available to every student. This includes the development of a new single integrated senior secondary certificate
- the creation of the new Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership to deliver advanced professional learning and development, to support teachers and school leaders and lift the status of the teaching profession in Victoria.
- the creation of Apprenticeships Victoria to help strengthen training coordination and oversight of major projects and through the Big Build Apprenticeships match trainees and apprentices with principal contractors at major project sites
- forming partnership agreements with Victoria's universities to support social prosperity and Victoria's economic recovery
- working with the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, the Department will support the Learn Local sector to continue its vital role in providing pathways for adult Victorians transitioning to further training and jobs, and build strong communities.

The next four years provide a critical opportunity for the Department to embed a high-quality training and skills sector in Victoria, with a vibrant Technical and Further Education (TAFE) network at its centre. A revitalised approach to skills and training provides a coordinated, purposeful way of working to meet Victoria's dynamic needs. Key reforms such as:

- creating the Victorian Skills Authority to be the key link connecting industry, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and others to better plan for the training needs of Victoria's economy
- establishing the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery to facilitate a strong, sustainable and high-quality public TAFE network, helping people develop the skills they need to gain employment and advance careers

The Department's work is supported by a strong regional presence with deep connections to local communities. Our focus on supporting educators and leaders in front line service delivery is underpinned by a desire to set high standards for effective public administration. This means continuing to strengthen how we work together to plan, govern and monitor the performance and delivery of our reforms.

The Department's 2021–25 Strategic Plan supports our staff, partners and providers across the education and training sectors to be successful and deliver across these key years. I am proud of our achievements so far and look forward to us continuing to deliver improvements to our education system.

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 three 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 2021–22 Victorian State Budget Paper 3 (BP3) sets out the Department's output groups and their budgeted costs. For the 2021–22 financial year, the Department's output budget totals \$15.9 billion. In addition to this, the 2021–22 State Budget

announced \$1.6 billion in asset initiatives over the next four years. This is shown in the tables below, including the current and future funding for the Department's new output initiatives until 2024–25.

The Department's output funding	2021-22 (\$m)
Strategy, Review and Regulation	117.8
Early Childhood Education	973.4
School Education – Primary	5,765.9
School Education – Secondary	4,713.1
Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development	2,599.8
Support Services Delivery	389.1
Support for Students with Disabilities	1,363.6
Total	15,922.8

The Department's 2021–22 output initiatives	2021-22 (\$m)	2022-23 (\$m)	2023-24 (\$m)	2024-25 (\$m)
Early Childhood Education				
Additional support for early years management	7.0	7.9	7.9	8.4
Child Link	23.4	21.5	22.6	18.6
Continuation of the early childhood language program	-	2.7	-	-
Giving vulnerable and disadvantaged kids the best start in life	8.6	8.2	8.5	8.5
Kindergarten enrolment-based funding	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.1
Maintaining universal access to 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten	8.1	8.1	-	-
Ready for school: Kinder for every three-year-old	21.3	23.4	15.0	62.7
School Education				
Addressing the cost of delivering education	6.1	9.4	9.9	16.3
Addressing underperformance in schools	2.6	5.3	11.6	-
Doctors in secondary schools	5.9	12.1	12.4	12.6
English as an additional language	2.5	12.8	-	-
Enhancing secondary vocational pathways	-	8.8	-	-
Essential maintenance and compliance	18.0	30.0	30.0	30.0
Increasing access to tech schools	2.3	6.0	6.2	6.0
Music in schools	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
New schools construction	0.7	10.8	17.4	18.1
Relocatable buildings program	9.0	3.0	3.0	3.1
School enrolment-based funding	167.2	171.4	175.7	180.1
School information technology: onsite technical support	4.0	5.3	6.4	7.5
School upgrades: growth for 2024	-	-	1.2	2.4
Student health and wellbeing	2.1	4.1	4.2	2.1
Swimming and water safety education	8.7	18.0	18.6	9.9
Targeted initiatives to attract more teachers	3.2	1.4	0.2	-
Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership	21.3	34.5	34.9	35.7

Support for Students with Disabilities				
Students with disabilities transport program	25.2	-	-	-
Support for students with disabilities and additional needs	4.8	9.8	5.0	-
Support Services Delivery				
Reducing the administrative burden on principals	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3
Social cohesion through education	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8
Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development				
Carmichael centre	0.5	-	-	-
Establishing the Victorian Skills Authority	17.7	22.2	22.5	22.9
Increasing the funding of high-quality and accessible training	14.1	29.6	29.8	25.5
More training places for the TAFE and training system	84.3	1.5	1.5	1.5
Skills and jobs centre bus for the Mallee	1.1	0.3	-	-
Tackling the digital skills divide to get Victorians into jobs	3.1	3.1	-	-
TAFE reform	11.0	4.0	-	-
Total output initiatives	502.3	484.8	454.5	482.0
Base and efficiency review	(31.9)	(62.8)	(94.6)	(111.3)

The Department's asset initiatives	2021-22 (\$m)	2022-23 (\$m)	2023-24 (\$m)	2024-25 (\$m)	TEI (\$m)
Early Childhood Education					
Child Link	5.5	-	-	-	5.5
Ready for school: Kinder for every three-year-old	-	-	-	44.8	44.8
School Education					
Doctors in Secondary Schools	0.4	-	-	-	0.4
Essential maintenance and compliance	1.6	56.6	20.8	1.0	80.0
Land acquisition	86.7	45.2	144.6	-	276.4
Minor Capital Works Fund	6.0	14.0	-	-	20.0
New schools construction	181.1	278.8	31.3	0.4	491.6
Relocatable Buildings Program	105.3	-	-	-	105.3
School upgrades	9.2	106.4	204.0	19.8	340.0
School upgrades: growth for 2024	2.3	23.2	49.8	9.5	85.0
Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership	11.6	10.2	-	-	21.8
Support for Students with Disabilities					
Accessible Buildings Program	10.0	5.0	-	-	15.0
Inclusive Schools Fund	1.0	9.0	-	-	10.0
Planning for schools	0.5	0.5	-	-	1.0
Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development					
Building better TAFEs fund	7.5	33.7	29.4	1.9	72.4
TAFE equipment and facilities fund for apprentices and trainees	12.0	-	-	-	12.0
Total asset initiatives	440.7	582.5	479.8	77.4	1,581.2

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 2021-22 Victorian State BP3¹. 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/2021-22-state-budget/2021-22-service-delivery>

² <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/Pages/annualreports.aspx>

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 1,009,400 students	15 to 65+ More than 297,000 government-subsidised enrolments in 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"> 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 4,327 approved education and care services providing long day care, kindergarten, outside-school-hours care, and family day care Approximately 279 licensed children's services providing limited-hour services such as occasional care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,553 government schools 723 non-government schools (497 Catholic schools and 226 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 vocational education and training) 274 Learn Local organisations, including community owned not-for-profit organisations and Adult Education Institutions, registered with the ACFE Board to deliver pre-accredited training 197 government-contracted private registered training organisations
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Current environment

The Department is operating in a challenging and complex environment as it seeks to support Victoria's economic and social recovery from the joint effects of Australia's worst bushfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last two years the Victorian education system rapidly adapted enabling learners to undertake remote and flexible learning. There were significant efforts made to adapt everything for the online environment, from curriculum, assessment and teaching practices, to wellbeing supports and school operations.

The Department undertook considerable work to understand the experiences of schools, students and families in the first phase of remote learning, which enabled us to respond quickly and improve our delivery over the course of 2021 and beyond. The Department is now embedding the best elements of remote learning and innovative technology to enhance learning and teacher practice.

In the early childhood sector, the success of learning from home centres on the importance of partnerships with families. The Department supports the sector with guidance and resources recognising that early childhood educators know their communities, families and children best.

Early childhood teachers and educators have successfully supported age-appropriate learning at home by working with parents, while offering services to children attending on-site.

The Department is using the lessons learnt from this period to embed agility into its services and modernise the way it works. With the potential for other disruptions including extreme weather and emergency situations, our services need to be more responsive, adaptable and flexible.

The Department is developing an Adaptation Action Plan to reflect the Victorian Government's priorities, as outlined in *The Climate Change Act 2017* and the Victorian Climate Change Strategy. The plan, to be released in October 2021, will translate the broader goals for climate change adaptation in Victoria's education and training system. Implementation of the plan commences in 2022, with targets set for 2025 and 2030.

Future demand

Victoria's population growth has slowed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, long-term population growth will likely remain a significant challenge for the Department when travel restrictions ease. The easing of travel restrictions brings opportunities as the flow of international students return to our schools, TAFEs and universities. The Department is carefully monitoring changes in population forecasts and government sector market share to inform its strategic planning.

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.

Our Stories: Tutor Learning Initiative

In 2020, the Victorian Government announced the Tutor Learning Initiative to provide students whose learning was disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic with additional small group learning support. The initiative employs over 5,600 teachers as tutors across Victoria's government and non-government schools. Tutors have been working across primary, secondary and specialist settings since Term 1, 2021.

The Department has conducted extensive research to develop resources and professional learning that supports schools to implement the most appropriate model of tutoring for their students. Schools have used existing student assessment data and individual education plans to monitor the progress of students participating in the Tutor Learning Initiative.



Workforce

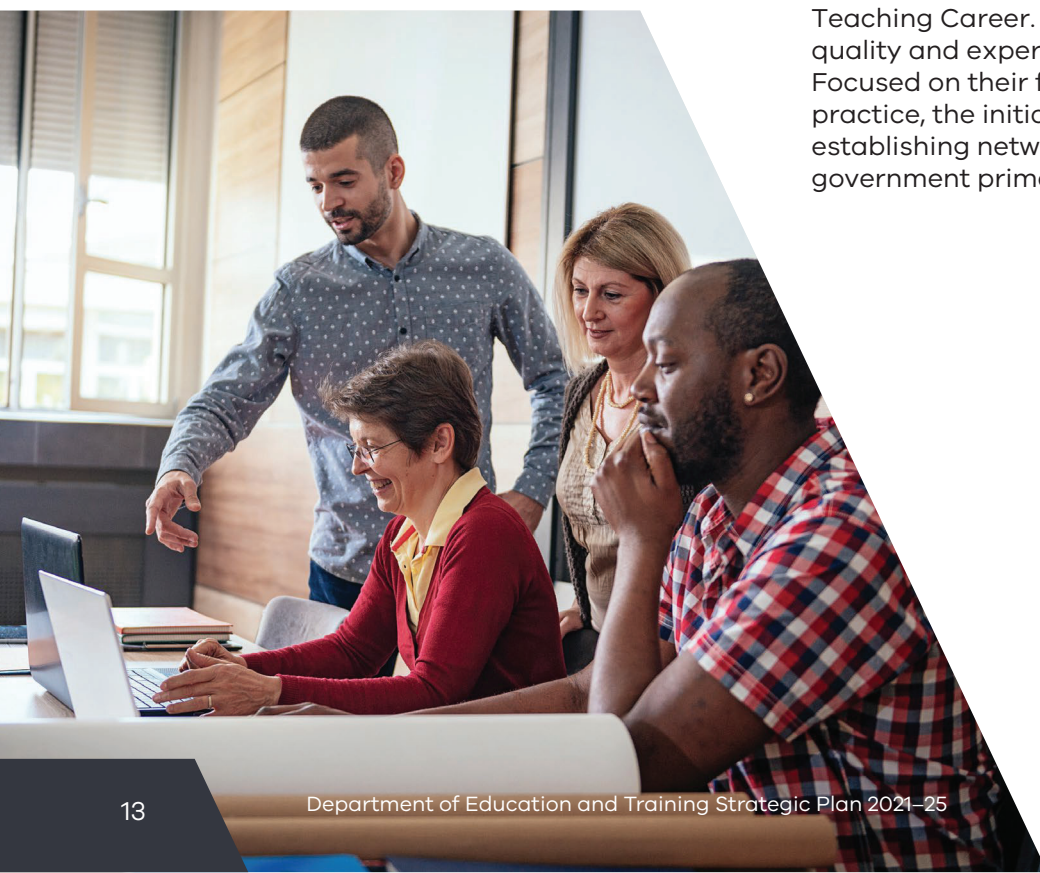
Building our workforce capability and supporting teacher and educator supply is essential to improving the quality of early childhood, school education and vocational education and training. Victoria's changing population is placing additional demands on our services and workforces, with specific planning and support required for staff across different education settings and locations.

At a system level, registered teachers are available to meet projected demand in schools and early childhood education. However, 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 spare capacity in the early childhood workforce, particularly in some regional locations. The Department continues monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on migration and the implications for both workforce supply and demand across schools, TAFEs and early childhood education.

To ensure Victoria is ready for the expansion in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, the Department is investing in a range of workforce attraction, retention and quality initiatives, including scholarships for aspiring kindergarten teachers, accelerated initial teacher education, employment incentives and professional development support. The Department is working with key stakeholders on the next steps in the early childhood workforce strategy (focused on kindergarten program staff), to take advantage of existing initiatives and identify new actions and partnerships across the sector. The strategy aims to increase workforce supply while also maintaining teaching quality.

The Department continues to invest in a highly skilled teaching workforce to ensure high-quality education across Victorian schools. The Excellence in Teacher Education Reforms are attracting additional high calibre teachers, raising the status and entry standards and ensuring high-quality pathways into the teaching profession are in place. Additional supports for graduate teachers have been introduced, with induction and mentoring through Graduate Teacher Conferences, the Graduate Learning Series, the Effective Mentoring Program, and Employment Based Programs.

The Department is trialling a new pilot initiative in North Eastern Melbourne, Western Melbourne and Inner Gippsland to Transform the First Years of the Teaching Career. The pilot seeks to improve the quality and experience of graduate teachers. Focused on their first two years of professional practice, the initiative fosters collaboration by establishing networks for graduate teachers in government primary schools.



The Learning Specialist Leading Excellence in Teaching and Learning initiatives are focused on recruiting, training, supporting and deepening the expertise of learning specialists for every Victorian school. These initiatives harness national and international experts and evidence to inform the Coaching for Influence program, Learning Specialist Communities of Practice and a Learning Specialist Professional Learning Suite.

The Victorian Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) initiative is based on the principle that students learn more when teachers work together. Through the Victorian PLCs, government schools are building a collaborative culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning to improve outcomes for every student. By the end of 2024, all government schools will be receiving intensive implementation support, including a comprehensive program of professional learning and expert advice from regionally based teams. These teams include experienced educators, a dedicated PLC regional manager and practice instructors, who will advise, coach and train school leaders in all aspects of PLC implementation.

A key priority within the Department's senior secondary pathways reforms, is increasing the supply and quality of teachers delivering VET to school students and applied learning, including the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The VET and VCAL workforce initiatives include an employment-based pathway to retrain industry professionals to become VET teachers, scholarships, and a professional learning program for VCAL teachers. This is complemented with an industry placement scheme for VET teachers. The scheme ensures teachers maintain up-to-date industry knowledge, provides grants for schools to collaborate and share VET teachers, and fosters innovation in the delivery and design of VET and VCAL.

Our Stories: Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership

The Victorian Government is investing in further improving the quality of teachers and school leaders through the creation of a new Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership. The new specialist academy will provide advanced professional learning for Victorian teachers and educational leaders in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The Teaching Excellence Program, the flagship of the academy, will be a one-year program supporting up to 500 teachers per year across all sectors. This program deepens teaching excellence for Victoria's highly skilled teachers, advancing their professional expertise through access to the latest research in the science of learning and discipline-based pedagogical content knowledge.

In addition, seven new regional centres at Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Moe and Shepparton will provide regional and rural teachers with local access to high-quality professional development. Responsiveness to regional needs and circumstances, and co-design with regional communities ensures each program is fit-for-purpose.

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 five 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 investing almost \$5.0 billion to fund kindergarten programs for three-year-olds. This gives children access to two years of play-based early learning before school. The reform is being implemented through a staged roll-out and has expanded to 21 local government areas delivering up to 15 hours per week of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in 2021. From 2022, three-year-old children across the rest of Victoria will have access to five hours of funded kindergarten. The hours will then progressively scale up to reach the full 15-hour subsidised program by 2029.

By 2029, \$1.68 billion will be invested to support the construction of new and expanded kindergarten facilities across the State to meet these reforms. This will be facilitated through the overarching 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, relocatable modular kindergarten grants program.

Supporting the continued development of the kindergarten sector is critical to the rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. This includes growing the provision of high-quality integrated kindergarten programs in long day care services. Work also continues with our local government and community-based Early Years Managers to drive reform and support access and quality across Victoria.

As the early childhood sector continues to expand, it is critical the regulatory functions remain responsive, to both enforce minimum standards and drive quality improvement.

The Department is also continuing the implementation of the Child Information Sharing (CIS) scheme. Led by the Department, the CIS scheme is a Whole of Victorian Government (WOVG) initiative, enabling authorised organisations to share information to improve the wellbeing and safety of children. In 2021, an independent review was tabled in Parliament, and implementation of the recommendations is continuing to be supported with training, a helpline, resources, and change management activities. A second review will take place in 2023. The CIS scheme is underpinned by Child Link, a digital register that integrates key information, drawn from existing government and children's service systems. Through Child Link, professionals working with children have the consolidated information they need to identify risks early and collaborate with other professionals working with the child and family. The system will be delivered by the end of 2021 with pilot users on-board in 2022.

The Department is committed to increasing kindergarten participation and engagement for vulnerable and disadvantaged 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.

Frankston North's newest child and family centre

As part of the Frankston North Education Plan, the Aldercourt Child and Family Centre will become Frankston North's newest integrated early learning centre. The centre is running the Our Place model, a one-stop-shop for the community, which aims to promote positive education outcomes for families and children.

The Our Place model was developed through a partnership between the Department and the Colman Foundation, providing parents and families access to a range of services from one location. Services include:

- funded Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old kindergarten
- primary, secondary and adult education
- maternal and child health services
- health and wellbeing support
- training and job seeking services.

Aldercourt Child and Family Centre will provide innovative, flexible spaces that support modern teaching practices and a welcoming community area. The principal of Aldercourt Primary School,

Kathie Arnold, said the centre would invite parents and the wider community to share school resources.

"These new facilities and the partnership with Our Place will mean even more Frankston North families will have access to the facilities they need, when they need them" she said.

The centre will provide a more seamless transition from kindergarten to primary school by strengthening transition programs between Aldercourt Primary School and the onsite child and family centre. This space will integrate the centre with the primary school through a shared entrance, enabling a common drop-off spot for parents.

Community Kinders Plus will run funded Three-Year-Old and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten to remove the financial barriers facing some families.

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 three 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 and wellbeing** – providing schools with the right support and structures to focus on each and every student, including their health and wellbeing.

- **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

The Department's continuous improvement framework for all Victorian government schools focuses our efforts on practices that are proven to have the greatest impact on student outcomes. Professional learning communities are driving a collaborative and rigorous focus on student data and the implementation of high-impact teaching practices.

The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy works to lift these skills across Victoria, in every government school, in every classroom, and for every student. As part of this strategy, the Department will implement the Excellence and Equity in Literacy and Numeracy and the Middle Years Literacy and Numeracy

Support (MYLNS) initiatives. MYLNS provides significant investments into individualised student support in Victoria. It provides direct teaching support to students in Years 8 to 10 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 teaching literacy and numeracy.

The Differentiated Support for School Improvement initiative is targeted at schools with complex challenges. The initiative tailors specific supports include building teacher and leadership capacity, establishing partnerships between schools to drive improvement and providing 16 executive class principals. This work enables schools to progress on their improvement journey, regardless of where they might start from.

Student inclusion and wellbeing

Schools in Victoria are focusing on the attainment of critical knowledge and skills, and on broader capabilities that set our students up for success. This includes supporting the social and emotional development of students and their health and wellbeing. This was reinforced during 2020, when there was a renewed appreciation of schools as a place of community, social connection and stability in the face of the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System made 65 recommendations in its final report delivered in March 2021. The recommendations create a system-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support, including a focus on early intervention. The Department is supporting the implementation of the recommendations by developing a new fund for

Our Stories: Senior Secondary Pathway Reforms

In 2019, the Victorian Government commissioned John Firth to conduct a review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling (the Firth Review). The Firth Review found that we need to do more to make vocational and applied learning in schools high-quality, relevant to the needs of employers, and available to all students. The review's 38 recommendations have been accepted in principle by the Government, and the Department has established a Senior Secondary Pathways Reform Taskforce to lead this program.

The Firth Review recommendations provide a roadmap to reform, building on the Victorian Government's continued investment in senior secondary schooling reforms since 2018. This includes funding to transform career education in Victorian government schools, ensuring students make more informed career and pathway decisions, and meet the demands of a rapidly changing, globalised job market. It also includes investments to establish Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships in over 100 Victorian schools. Head Start supports students to start a trade at school and receive better quality and on the job training, while completing their senior secondary certificate.

These reforms will support students to receive a great education, learn more about the world of work and develop strong life skills, to make informed choices about further study and their future careers. This benefits our economy in Victoria as a whole, and most importantly, impacts the success and happiness of young people in our communities.

schools. Through this schools will be able to select the most appropriate suite of initiatives to support students' mental health and wellbeing, guided by an evidence-based menu. The investment will also expand the Mental Health in Primary Schools pilot to 100 schools in 2022. The Department will continue to support broader mental health reform through WOVG initiatives across early childhood, schools and higher education settings.

The Mental Health Practitioners initiative provides funding to enable every government secondary school campus to recruit a suitably qualified, school-based mental health practitioner by 2022. 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, including clinical supervision.

A new funding and support model for students with disability is being introduced to government schools over five years from mid-2021. Funding for personalised educational adjustments for students with disability with high-needs will remain a core part of the new funding and support model.

The reform introduces a new inclusive and strengths-based approach to identifying both student need and adjustments required in their educational setting. The model introduces a new school-level funding allocation to deliver classroom and school-wide adjustments. The aim is to build capability in inclusive education across government schools making this part of everyday practice in all schools and classrooms. This improves the achievement, participation, and wellbeing outcomes for students with a disability.

The Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-26 supports further opportunities for Koorie Victorians to secure the full benefits of the Education State reforms. This work underpins Victoria's strong and steadfast commitment to close the gap in educational outcomes between Koorie and non-Koorie Victorians. The plan will achieve this by continuing the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy program, expanding the Koorie Pre-School Assistants program to four new locations, and continuing the Koorie Families as First Educators and Koorie Engagement Support Officer programs. To progress Aboriginal self-determination in education, additional funding has been allocated to support a two-year statewide consultation and co-design process.



The Department is working closely with the Departments of Families, Fairness and Housing, Justice and Community Safety and Premier and Cabinet on WOVG implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations. This includes continuing to deliver the Respectful Relationships initiative in early childhood and schools which promotes respect, positive attitudes and behaviours, and teaches children how to build healthy relationships. Respectful Relationships supports the mandatory teaching of consent, introduced in Term 2, 2021.

As part of the 2020-21 State Budget, funding was provided to increase the availability of before and after school care and school holiday programs. The Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Establishment initiative supports increased workforce participation, particularly amongst women, by providing up to \$75,000 to 400 government schools or clusters of schools that deliver primary aged education without an existing OSHC service. This funding will be used by schools for program management, educators, resources/equipment, transport, administration, facility upgrades, staff training and salaries.

Modern, vibrant school facilities

The Department continues to deliver its substantial school infrastructure program through investments in new schools, upgrades and modernisations and Building Works package. This builds on the Victorian Government's commitments to open 100 schools by 2026, with 49 schools to open between 2019 and 2023.

Place-based Education Plans bring together a range of investments in a community. The plans enable the integration of service planning across early childhood, school and post-compulsory education. The plans are designed to accelerate the impact of improvement initiatives and leverage collective responsibility for transforming education in a community. The process of developing plans builds strong, ongoing local connections between education providers, parents, community, industry, government and support services.

There are eight Education Plans in Bayswater, Bendigo, Flemington, Footscray, Frankston North, Lilydale/Upper Yarra, Oakleigh and Shepparton.

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 and 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 is able to adapt 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 October 2020. The review made 30 recommendations for improving our training and skills system so it can deliver the skills Victoria needs now and into the future. In response, the Department is establishing the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) to deliver a range of initiatives to strengthen the quality of teaching and training, and improve pathways for skilled workers. The VSA will be an anchor organisation, bringing together industry, providers, and other stakeholders providing data insights on priority training areas. This work will culminate in an annual Victorian Skills Plan to better guide training delivery.

TAFEs remain critical to Victoria's training and skills sector. These organisations have been underpinning the economy through education and training for decades, helping individuals contribute to their local communities. A new Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery, together with the VSA will make our skills system easier to navigate and create clear, effective structures for working together to plan for and respond to skill demand.

The Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery will foster collaboration across the TAFE network and help TAFEs share services, enhance quality, and better meet the training needs of students, employers and communities.

TAFEs will also be supported through the Department's Building Better TAFEs initiative. This enables the progressive building and modernising of TAFE facilities to reach optimum functionality, meet industry standards and compliance requirements, and meet students' expectations.

In addition to rolling out the Building Better TAFEs Fund, the Department will develop a TAFE asset strategy and an assessment and prioritisation approach to provide a pipeline of refurbishment and development projects. Investment will be prioritised in TAFE facilities that target training and skill shortages, upgrading these to be modern and fit-for-purpose facilities ensuring that TAFEs remain relevant and competitive.

Through the Big Build Apprenticeships program, the Department oversees and coordinates the employment and training of apprentices and trainees on Victoria's Big Build infrastructure projects. This transformative new approach leverages group training organisations and Victoria's infrastructure program to create high-quality skills pathways for apprentices and trainees. It helps support Victorians to access these opportunities, including women and the disadvantaged. The Big Build Apprenticeships program will enhance the impact of the Major Projects Skills Guarantee, support the employment and training of up to 1,500 apprentices and trainees each year and secure a pipeline of skilled workers in critical areas.

Similarly, the Department is addressing skills and job needs for major infrastructure projects in Victoria through policy coordination, information sharing and real-world demonstration projects such as North East Link and the New Footscray Hospital. The Department is including additional demonstration projects such as the Warrnambool Learning and Library Hub.



Through the Big Build Apprenticeships program, TAFE is placed at the centre of these projects. This includes new skills and jobs centres and on-site support to provide workers with skills advice and address project-specific training needs.

The Department continues to monitor and support the delivery of Free TAFE for Priority Courses which provides free training for TAFE students in priority skill areas and key apprenticeship pathway courses. Free TAFE builds on recent VET reforms aimed at lifting quality and aligning training to the jobs of the Victorian economy. This supports students to train in courses that provide occupations in high-demand industries and important areas like preventing family violence and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Working with the ACFE Board, the Department supports the largest, most diverse adult community education sector in Australia. The Learn Local sector has a strong record in engaging adults with low prior education. Additional places for pre-accredited digital literacy and employability training courses have been funded through the 2021–22 State Budget, supporting more Victorians progress to further education, training, and jobs.

The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund supports Victorian universities by contributing to capital works, applied research and research infrastructure projects. This reflects a new partnership model between the Victorian Government and universities, that also supports economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. To enshrine this new partnership model, the Victorian Government established partnership agreements with the 10 universities operating under State legislation. These agreements set out shared objectives and principles for how universities and the Government work together to benefit Victoria. This includes achieving a stronger alignment between education pathways and industry demand, where the Victorian Government is a significant employer. This means the Department is focused on delivering a skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers.

Our Stories: Supporting COVID-19 response and recovery

The Free TAFE program is playing an important role in providing a pipeline of essential healthcare workers, such as nurses. Free TAFE plays a crucial role in helping retrain those facing unemployment and underemployment. In 2020 the Free TAFE initiative continued to play a critical role in providing a pipeline of workers for jobs in demand. Over 30,000 Free TAFE students started the training they need for in-demand jobs, such as bolstering the NDIS, Family Violence and Infrastructure workforces. Over 47,000 students were enrolled in a Free TAFE course at the end of 2020, an increase of 21 per cent on those at the end of 2019. After being added to the Free TAFE course list for 2020, commencements in Early Childhood Education and Care courses grew by 113 per cent. This will provide pathways into the jobs Victoria needs to build and look after our growing state.

The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund provides significant investment in Victoria's universities acknowledging their critical role in the State's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund supports university projects that boost productivity and drive innovation in areas of State priority. The first project to be funded was a partnership between the University of Melbourne and Illumina, a global biotech company, to establish a genomics hub in Victoria's Parkville precinct. This is a first of its kind in the Asia Pacific and brings together the best of genomic expertise and technology in Australia. This is just one example of the exciting projects arising from this fund. Other projects announced cover priorities such as clean energy, manufacturing, agriculture, circular economic, digital transformation, education and family violence. The Department has worked closely with universities to ensure these projects maximise the benefits for Victoria by creating jobs and supporting innovative sectors.

Our Organisational Approach

The Department has a clear focus on delivery. To ensure that investment in our education and training reforms achieve the desired outcomes, the Department is targeting resources and funding to areas and learners that need them most. We are also embedding 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.

Through this approach, the Department is reforming its funding models and asset management. These reforms aim to provide communities with high-quality, modern infrastructure and equipment that supports new ways of learning. This requires targeting funding and resources for students in need and providing better information about school funding, performance and student outcomes. This work encourages collaboration, drives improvement and strengthens accountability.

In addition, the Department's Asset Strategy 2021–31 seeks to develop and maintain a high performing asset base that supports improved and world leading 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 better practice and the Victorian Government's Asset Management Accountability Framework.

The Department is using the innovations and lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve corporate service delivery, including introducing paperless operations and electronic workflows. This will drive the automation of record keeping, improve efficiency, productivity and transparency, while reducing costs and environmental impacts.



Our People

Over the coming years the Department will implement a new Victorian Public Service (VPS) People Strategy. The strategy focuses on four areas that have the most impact on our delivery and performance, these are Connected Culture, Purposeful Leadership, Enabled and Capable, and Inclusive Organisation. These focus areas guide our actions to build on our existing workforce capabilities and support staff to do high-quality work in an inclusive and safe workplace.

Embedding the benefits of flexible working in the VPS supports teams to work effectively in a hybrid way. Flexible working arrangement support professionalism and autonomy, and improve the ability of individuals to manage personal responsibilities and interests.

Similarly, the Department's Aboriginal Inclusion Plan–Wirnalung Ganai 2019–21 is aligned to the Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026 and aims to create a culturally safe place for employees, partners, learners and families.

The plan reflects the Department values, respects Aboriginal voice and expertise and demonstrates a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination.

We are committed to staff wellbeing under the Safe and Well in Education Strategy. The Strategy assists everyone at the Department to understand their health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities, responsibilities and the supports available to acquit these. It works to build stronger mental health and wellbeing by creating a shared culture of responsibility and support. The Strategy aims to simplify the management of health and safety compliance, provide more expert advice and hands-on support to prevent and respond to emerging risks. By implementing the Strategy, the Department will create and maintain an environment where safety and wellbeing are central to how we learn and work.



