



Ready for kinder, ready for school, ready for life

MORE SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND THE MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICE

Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years. The Andrews Labor Government is investing in more support for new parents and their children so that all children can thrive and grow.

VICTORIAN BUDGET 2017/18

The *Victorian Budget 2017/18* invests **\$202.1 million** in the Early Childhood Reform Plan – a record boost to our state’s early years services. The Victorian Government is delivering on our commitment to give every child the best start in life.

The Plan is not just about the wellbeing of children today, but the prosperity of our state into the future.

The Budget includes an **\$81.1 million** investment in a package of Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and parenting support reforms to help families get their kids ready for kinder and ready for their lives ahead.

It all starts with the early years

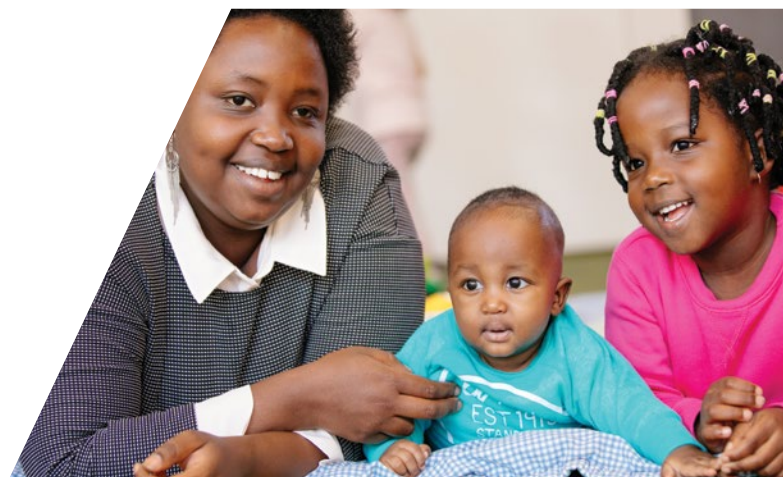
We all want our children to grow up ready to lead happy, healthy, successful and meaningful lives.

We know that more than any other time, the early years shape who our children will become and what kind of life they will go on to lead.

To help Victorian parents give their children the best start in life, the Victorian Government is making a landmark investment in parenting support and the MCH Service.

This investment is part of the Early Childhood Reform Plan, which focuses on building a system that is flexible to children’s needs, welcoming to children experiencing disadvantage, and ready to deliver quality services for all Victorian children and families.

Together with the approach outlined in the *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children*, these reforms are part of an integrated plan to intervene early and effectively to help families overcome these serious issues, and build a connected system of support across the Victorian service system.



ENHANCED MCH EXPANSION

Enhanced MCH is a targeted service for families who need some additional help, and may be at risk of poor outcomes due to factors like parent-infant attachment concerns, premature or low birth weight babies, children with a disability, parental mental health issues or family violence.

The service is currently funded for 10 per cent of families with a child up to one year of age.

Recognising that many families need support beyond their child’s first birthday, the Victorian Government is committing **\$37.7 million** to expand the Enhanced MCH Service to support 15 per cent of Victorian families with children from birth to three years of age. This will provide families with 20 hours support across their child’s first three years. When fully implemented, about 37,000 families will receive Enhanced MCH.

This expansion will be guided by the work currently underway to revise and strengthen the Enhanced MCH Service Guidelines.

Given the large scale of this expansion, the roll-out will occur progressively over the next four years.

MCH RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Royal Commission into Family Violence noted that pregnancy and the early post-natal period is a time of heightened family violence risk. The Victorian Government is delivering **\$11 million** in funding to provide an additional outreach visit where an MCH nurse is concerned that family violence may be occurring. This will allow an additional visit to around 12,000 families each year.

MCH nurses will have the flexibility to undertake the additional visit in an appropriate location, such as the woman's home, or another convenient and safe place such as an early learning centre. MCH nurses will also be able to choose to extend an existing visit.

MCH nurses are highly skilled at supporting women and families. They use their clinical judgement in assessing for family violence risk and referring women to specialist supports.

To build on their existing skills, MCH nurses will also receive tailored training to support them in working with women and children at risk of, or experiencing, family violence.

Workforce training and additional visits will commence later in 2017.

MCH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ATTRACTION

To support the roll-out of these initiatives, the Victorian Government is committing **\$5.2 million** to provide all MCH nurses with professional development opportunities, including training to help MCH nurses deal with increasingly complex family needs and issues such as trauma.

To ensure there are enough MCH nurses to successfully deliver these reforms, we are providing additional funding to attract more MCH nurses to the workforce.

MCH LINE

We will also provide **\$4.9 million** in funding to improve parents' access to reliable, evidence-based information and advice.

Through the MCH Line phone service, parents are able to access information and support from a trained MCH nurse on a range of issues such as child health, nutrition and parenting. The MCH Line provides support to parents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Additional staffing will be provided to the MCH Line to meet increased demand. This means the MCH Line will be able to answer around 20,000 more calls each year, to ensure parents get the support they need.

SUPPORTED PLAYGROUPS

Supported playgroups provide an opportunity for children to learn through play, and for parents to spend time with their children in a fun environment. A qualified facilitator uses evidence-based practice to help parents build their confidence and skills, meet other parents and create a positive home learning environment.

Supported playgroups are currently operated by some local governments and community sector organisations. However, they are funded in fewer than half of the local government areas across Victoria.

The Victorian Government is delivering **\$22.3 million** in funding to expand supported playgroups. This funding will add approximately 750 new supported playgroups and make them available across the state. It will mean an additional 6,000 families will be able to participate in a supported playgroup each year.

The funding for the expansion of supported playgroups commences in 2017.





OTHER REFORMS

Supporting Koorie families and children

We are working with Koorie communities to deliver **\$5.4 million** of supports for Koorie families. The *Koorie Families as First Educators* program will be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in five Koorie communities and, along with four new Koorie supported playgroups, will help Koorie families provide a strong foundation for their children's learning and development.

These initiatives support *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026*.

Supporting children and families to transition to the NDIS

As the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continues throughout Victoria, the Victorian Government will continue to support the families of young children with a disability to be NDIS-ready and understand the supports available under the scheme. To help families during the transition period, we will invest **\$7.2 million**. This funding will reduce the number of children waiting for intervention and support until the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Agency Early Childhood Intervention model.

Partnership with local government

An essential element of a better early childhood system is strengthening how we work with local government. *Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years: A Compact between the Department of Education and Training, Department of Health and Human Services and Local Government (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria)* has been agreed to formalise a closer working relationship to lift outcomes for young children and families. It is a commitment to work together in new ways to improve joint planning, coordination and information sharing to better support children and families wherever they live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Minister's Early Childhood Development Expert Panel, the MCH Reference Group and the Department's Early Childhood Development Advisory Group have provided valuable insights that informed the Plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the Plan and how it affects you, visit

www.education.vic.gov.au/ecreform



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