

EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM PLAN



Ready for kinder
Ready for school
Ready for life



Education
and Training

EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM PLAN

Making Victoria the Education State is about supporting all children to learn and thrive.

All parents want to give their children the best start in life.

We know that you want your children to be happy and healthy. You want them to learn and grow so they can live fulfilling and productive lives. We want this for Victoria's children too.

More than any other time, early childhood shapes who children will become and what kind of life they will lead.

During these early years, as a child's brain is developing, the foundations are laid for their cognitive, speech, language, social and emotional skills, and long-term development.

Young children do not spend their days in a classroom, but they are always learning – as they explore their world, as they interact with adults and other children, and as they play.

The biggest influence on a young child is their parents. Taking on this role can be daunting, and all parents need support at times. Like any skill, parenting can be learned and improved, which is why having access to the right support and information is so important.

Kinder builds on the foundations laid at home to help children learn and develop. It's a time when children learn to make friends and share, to communicate, and gain confidence to try new things. Early childhood educators play with children to help them learn, and help them build the skills they need to be ready for school.

We know that Victoria has strong early childhood services that are among the best in the country. But we aspire to be among the best in the world.

Over the next 10 years, our ground-breaking reforms will benefit all Victorian families and children by delivering world-class early childhood services.

Through the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* we are investing a landmark **\$202.1 million** in kinder, Maternal and Child Health (MCH), and parenting supports, to help get kids ready for kinder, ready for school and ready for happy and successful lives.





GIVING VICTORIAN CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE

SUPPORTING PARENTS

We know that having access to information and support helps parents to be confident that they are doing the best for their child. That is why we are strengthening our MCH Service and providing additional help to families who need it.

Better access to information

We know that as parents there will be times when you need to access accurate information and expert advice quickly and conveniently.

We are spending **\$4.9 million** to provide information when you need it, including by adding additional staff for our MCH phone line, so that you can easily access support from our trained MCH nurses – 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

More Enhanced MCH support

All families experience challenges. Parents often encounter difficulties with breastfeeding, fussy eating, language development, sleeping and settling, or managing toddler behaviour. The Enhanced MCH Service provides additional support for families who are experiencing challenges.

Previously, this extra support cut out after just one year. We're providing **\$37.7 million** to extend the hours of support to make it available to families with children up to three years of age. When fully implemented, about 37,000 families will receive Enhanced MCH.

Extra visit from MCH nurses for women and children at risk of family violence

Studies show that pregnancy and the early post-natal period is a time of heightened family violence risk. MCH nurses see new parents regularly and are well positioned to provide help.

The Victorian Government is spending **\$11 million** so that MCH nurses are able to provide an additional visit to support women and children, and connect them to specialist support services. This will support an additional visit to around 12,000 families each year.

Supporting our MCH workforce

We are providing more than **\$5.2 million** in funding to attract, retain and develop our MCH workforce, including training to support MCH nurses' ongoing professional development.

More playgroups

Playgroups provide a space for children to learn through play and help parents make stronger connections with other parents and their community. This is especially important in the first years of a child's life.

We're providing **\$22.3 million** to expand supported playgroups across the state, giving families who need extra support access to groups run by trained facilitators. This will add approximately 750 new supported playgroups and will mean an additional 6,000 families will be able to participate in a supported playgroup each year.

To continue to link parents with local supports beyond their First Time Parents Group, we are also providing funding to help improve the connections between these Groups and community playgroups.

More support for Koorie families and children

We know that Koorie families are more likely to access services when they feel culturally supported and have an existing relationship with the provider. That is why we're spending **\$5.4 million** to support Koorie parents and children with culturally relevant services.

To help Koorie parents provide a strong foundation for their children, we will fund four new Koorie supported playgroups and the Koorie Families as First Educators program, which will be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in five Koorie communities in areas of high need.



BETTER KINDER FOR ALL CHILDREN AND MORE HELP FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT

We know that early learning lasts a lifetime. That is why we are improving quality and fairness in kinder, and ensuring that more children can benefit.

School readiness funding

Some kids need more support to get the most out of kinder.

In an Australian first, we're giving extra resources to kindergartens so they can help children most in need.

We will boost funding to kinders by **\$55.3 million**, so that they can provide additional support to kids who need it. This could include building the skills of staff in language and literacy teaching, bringing in a speech therapist, or spending more time in one-on-one teaching so that all children get the most out of kinder.

Helping families find a kinder place

We're providing **\$5.5 million** to local governments to expand central enrolment – a process that makes it easier to find your child a spot at a local kinder.

Building new kindergartens

We're providing **\$10 million** to build new early childhood facilities at government primary school sites to make it easier for families to access early childhood facilities and to support improved transitions from kinder to school.

In addition, we're providing **\$1.1 million** to reform kindergarten funding for non-government schools to encourage more of them to offer a kindergarten program, particularly in low socioeconomic areas.

Meeting demand for Early Start Kindergarten

We're providing **\$6.3 million** to meet growing demand for Early Start Kindergarten. This will help more Koorie children and children known to child protection access two years of kinder for free.

Helping more children access kinder places

We're setting aside kinder places so kids who need them most don't miss out.

The Government is providing **\$2.3 million** to hold kinder places open for those most in need, such as Koorie children, children known to child protection and refugees, even after enrolment deadlines have passed.

Supporting kindergartens to improve their quality

To make sure every child is ready for school we are increasing the amount of support provided to kindergartens to improve their quality through a **\$22.8 million** investment.

All kindergartens will receive increased support from the Department of Education and Training to deliver high-quality education, and grants will enable access to intensive coaching, training and advice to kindergartens that need it most.





SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

Helping more children with a disability to go to kinder

All kids benefit from kinder and we want to make sure kids with a disability don't miss out.

We are spending **\$5 million** so that more children with a disability can attend and fully participate in kinder each year, including children with severe disabilities who could not attend without support.

Supporting families in the transition to the NDIS

We will continue to support the families of young children with a disability or a developmental delay transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We are spending **\$7.2 million** to help families during the transition period. This funding will reduce the number of children waiting for intervention and support the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Agency Early Childhood Intervention model.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the Early Childhood Reform Plan and how it can support you and your family, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/ecreform