The Hon James Merlino MP

Minister for Education

Monday, 27 May 2019

# GIVING VICTORIAN KIDS GREAT KINDERS AND THE BEST START IN LIFE

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring every Victorian child has access to a great kinder, and that early childhood educators have the training and support they need to give every kid a great start with the biggest reform to early learning in the state’s history – starting in regional Victoria.

As promised, the *Victorian Budget 2019/20* invests a record $1 billion in early childhood education, as part of a $4 billion investment in education – from kindergartens and schools through to higher education and TAFE.

The Budgetinvests more than $880 million to kickstart the rollout of 15 hours of subsidised kindergarten programs for all three-year-old children by 2029. The rollout will start next year in six regional local government areas – Buloke, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians, South Gippsland, Strathbogie and Yarriambiack.

In 2021 this will be expanded to a further 15 regional local government areas: Alpine, Ararat, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Colac-Otway, Corangamite, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Hepburn, Indigo, Loddon, Murrindindi, Southern Grampians, Towong and West Wimmera.

The program will then be extended across the state, so every Victorian child will have access to at least five hours per week of three-year-old kinder by 2022.The Labor Government will work with the early years sector to support new and expanded facilities where they’re needed most.

As part of our record investment in early childhood, the Budget includes $316.5 million for early childhood infrastructure, which will support the sector to invest in new and expanded kindergarten facilities, when and where they are needed most.

We are providing an additional $6 million for further rounds of the Inclusive Kindergartens Facilities Program to improve playgrounds and buildings, and provide equipment to help kindergartens be more inclusive and accessible for children with additional needs.

The Budget also invests $92.4 million to support early childhood teachers and educators through more professional development, mentoring and scholarships, so that as three-year-old kinder rolls out across Victoria, our children continue to have access to highly-trained professionals.

The Diploma and Certificate III of Early Childhood Education and Care will also be added to the Free TAFE list from 2020, which is vital as the Labor Government delivers three-year-old kinder across Victoria.

We are providing $26.1 million to extend the Australian-first School Readiness Funding initiative to three-year-olds and supporting children to get the most out of kinder, so they are not left behind when they start school.

The investment in this year’s Budget builds on a $135.9 million investment in early childhood education in 2018/19, including $42.9 million for kindergarten builds and upgrades, and $17.9 million for teachers to deliver language classes in about 160 kinders across the state.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

*“Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years – that’s why we’re undertaking the biggest reform to kinder ever seen in our state and we’re starting it all in regional Victoria.”*

*“This Budget keeps the promise we made to Victorian kids and their parents – to give them the best start in kinder and the best start in life.”*

*“The rollout of three-year-old kinder will start next year, and there will be more investment in teacher training so our kids continue to get first-class support.”*