

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**

Deputy Premier

Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19

Minister for Education



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## FREE PADS AND TAMPONS IN ALL GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Free pads and tampons are now available in every government school in Victoria – reducing the discomfort and embarrassment around periods for girls and saving families hundreds of dollars every year.

Victoria is the first state or territory in Australia to ensure all students attending government schools have access to free pads and tampons – with the initiative now in Victoria’s more than 1500 Government schools.

The \$20.7 million initiative helps students feel more comfortable managing their periods by providing discreet and easy access to products when they need them.

Pads and tampons are available free of charge in school bathrooms, relieving anxiety and embarrassment for girls, and ensuring they can get the most from their education.

Schools will play an important role in promoting a positive culture around menstrual health and build a supportive environment among the school community.

The initiative also aims to reduce the stigma of periods, make school more inclusive and will ease the cost of living on families while helping students focus on their studies.

Lack of easy access to pads and tampons can negatively impact on students’ participation in sport and everyday school activities. Students may not be able to concentrate in class, feel comfortable or feel confident doing physical activity, or they may miss school altogether.

Sanitary items are a necessity, not a luxury, and this initiative is supporting tens of thousands of girls and young women in schools across the state.

As part of this initiative, students also receive important health information about how to manage their periods.

The Government is also supporting students’ health and wellbeing through a number of other initiatives including mental health practitioners in secondary schools and the expansion of the School Breakfast Clubs program to 500 new schools.

Through its Education State Targets, the Victorian Government is committed to building resilience and physical activity in students, while also increasing access and equity in education.

Right now, only senior secondary students and other students who are not able to be supervised at home and for who no other arrangements can be made – including children whose parents cannot work from home, vulnerable children and children with a disability – are learning at school. All other students are learning remotely.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino**

*“We’re proud to be providing free sanitary items in all Victorian government schools to ensure that students – regardless of their background or circumstances – can focus and participate fully in their education.”*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Women Gabrielle Williams**

*“Getting your period is a normal part of life and sanitary items are a basic necessity. We’re ensuring all girls in our public schools have access to pads and tampons when they need them, so they can focus on their studies.”*

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