

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Thursday, 20 May 2021

SUPPORTING OUR KIDS TO BE HEALTHY AND HAPPY

Our kids deserve to grow up healthy and happy. And after their family and friends, our schools are one of the biggest supports in a young person's life.

As we build our mental health system from the ground up, we're putting schools at the centre of our response – helping to make sure they have everything they need to support their students, families and communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* invests a dedicated \$277 million in new support for our schools, ensuring mental health and wellbeing is a core part of a student's experience at school.

This includes establishing a new \$200 million School Mental Health Fund, which schools will use to deliver programs, staff and other support specific to their school community's needs.

The Fund will be rolled out to all regional and rural government schools as a priority from Term 3, 2022, with metropolitan schools to follow from 2023. Schools will be able to draw from a range of evidence-based measures proven to work – from the 'Positive Education' model to therapy dog programs to mental health first aid training.

Schools will also be able to use their funding to engage more mental health and wellbeing staff to further support their children and young people.

Funding will massively expand the Mental Health in Primary Schools pilot, reaching 100 schools. A partnership with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, the pilot enables schools to employ a Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, while also supporting staff to better understand and respond to mental health and wellbeing issues affecting their students.

This investment builds on our pledge to fund a mental health practitioner in every government secondary and specialist secondary school by the end of 2021.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier and Minister for Education James Merlino

"Whenever I visit a school, families and teachers tell me mental and health wellbeing is the single biggest issue affecting our kids."

"This is our opportunity to fundamentally transform the way we support our young people. That means putting schools at the heart of our response – giving them the funding, the staff, the tools and whatever else they might need to be there for our kids."