

Media Release

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



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A HEAD START ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER PATH

Secondary students eager to work in the early childhood sector can start their career path early, thanks to a new partnership between a national early childhood provider and the Victorian Government's *Head Start* program.

Minister for Education James Merlino today launched a Head Start partnership with Think Childcare – the largest brokered by the Head Start initiative for the early childhood education qualification.

At least one Head Start school-based trainee will be placed in each of Think Childcare's 49 centres across Victoria – providing a supported pathway for almost 50 students to gain experience and training in the growing early childhood education sector while also helping meet workforce needs in local areas.

Trainees will receive a high-quality education from early learning training specialist Selmar Institute of Education – helping them gain a Certification III Early Childhood Education and Care qualification. In the first year, they will spend one to two days per week in paid employment, increasing to three to four days in their final year.

The \$49.8 million Head Start initiative is a model for apprenticeships and traineeships for school students, supporting them to complete their VCE or VCAL alongside paid on-the-job training so they can achieve both a vocational and school-based education.

The Head Start initiative will deliver up to 1,700 apprenticeships and traineeships by 30 June 2022, supported by school-based staff responsible for matching students with high-quality employers – with 10 Head Start clusters already established across 130 schools in Victoria.

The Government has invested \$38.1 million to transform vocational and applied learning in senior secondary schooling, which includes the development of a new single integrated senior secondary certificate.

The Government is also investing \$210 million over seven years to attract and retain a high-quality early childhood workforce as part of the statewide roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"We are creating education and training pathways for students to get the skills they need for the jobs they want, while completing their senior secondary education."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"We are pleased to provide a supported pathway for students to take the first step into the growing early childhood education sector, while also helping meet local workforce demand."

Quote attributable to Think Childcare Quality Advisor Kylie Morris

"This opportunity will open so many doors to the courageous trainees who choose to go on this journey with us. However, the real winners will be children who will benefit from the impact these students make in their lives."

Quote attributable to Selmar Institute of Education Chief Executive Officer Jo Asquith

"We are excited to be able to provide future-ready, care and compassionate skills to young career makers aspiring to become the next leaders in a such a vital sector."

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