

Media Release

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



Monday, 31 January 2022

A SAFE START TO SCHOOL FOR MORE THAN ONE MILLION STUDENTS

The 2022 school year is now underway, with Victorian students back in the classroom benefitting from key COVIDSafe measures to keep schools open and safe – including students at the Andrews Labor Government’s 14 brand-new schools.

Minister for Education James Merlino today officially opened the new Port Melbourne Secondary College, welcoming its first Year 7 students who join more than one million students across the state – including 77,500 new Preps starting their school journey – heading to school for the year.

Port Melbourne Secondary College is one of 14 new schools the Labor Government has opened in 2022 as part of its work to deliver 100 new schools by 2026 – with 48 of those schools now open for students and families in Victoria’s fastest-growing areas.

The world-class new vertical school will cater for 1100 students – with facilities like a fabrication lab and robotics workshop, 200-seat lecture theatre, gymnasium with competition-grade basketball and netball court and outdoor art and learning terraces, giving local students the best learning opportunities.

The school has a strong focus on STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) and also includes Learning Resource Centre spaces that can be used by the wider community in its design – which honours the area’s strong maritime history.

Students, staff and school communities across Victoria have returned to school to a full suite of COVIDSafe measures to make sure the classroom is as safe as possible – with surveillance testing, improved ventilation, high rates of vaccination and comprehensive workforce planning in place to minimise disruption to learning.

More than 6 million rapid antigen tests will be delivered by today for the first fortnight of surveillance testing, helping to stop the spread of coronavirus in schools and early childhood settings before it reaches the classroom.

This surveillance testing is strongly recommended for all primary and secondary school students and staff, twice-weekly at home before school, while students and staff at specialist schools are recommended to test five days each week due to the higher risk of severe illness for medically vulnerable children.

All 51,000 air purification devices have arrived in government and low-fee non-government schools in time for the beginning of term, helping remove potentially infectious particles from high-risk areas of schools – while more than 300 shade sails are already under construction, helping more classes learn safely outdoors.

The pool of inactive or retired teachers and school staff, and final year teaching students, has seen more than 346 teachers and 28 principals ready to be employed for short-term stints at schools as required – reducing disruption to students even in the case of COVID-19-related absences.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

“The first day of school is a big day – and even more so after the last two years. I want to wish all students and staff heading to school this year all the very best for an exciting and much less disrupted school year.”

“We’ve done the work to make sure schools are as safe as they can be – so we can keep our school communities protected and ensure that 2022 is a much less disrupted year of learning.”

Quote attributable to Member for Albert Park Martin Foley

“I couldn’t be more excited to see Port Melbourne Secondary College open – it’s a world-class vertical school that will give local kids a fantastic education and great opportunities for the future.”

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New schools opening in 2022:

- Bass Coast College – San Remo Campus
- Clyde Creek Primary School
- Clyde Secondary College
- Deanside Primary School
- Endeavour Hills Specialist School
- Gilgai Plains Primary School
- Greater Shepparton Secondary College
- Greenvale Secondary College
- McKinnon Secondary College – East Campus
- Port Melbourne Secondary College
- Strathtulloh Primary School
- Willowbank Primary School
- Wollert Primary School
- Wurun Senior Campus