

Thursday, 26 May 2022

A NEW PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

The Andrews Labor Government is making sure Victorian students with disability are better supported by their teachers and peers through a new partnership with Australian of the Year Dylan Alcott AO and *Get Skilled Access*.

The new partnership will design and deliver a series of Abilities Awareness in Schools resources to promote disability awareness among students and staff as part of the Labor Government's landmark Disability Inclusion reforms.

The resources will include videos featuring Dylan Alcott and others with lived experience of disability – exploring topics to build students' understanding of disability and improve their confidence to interact with classmates with disability. It will target students of all ages in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

The resources, which will start to roll-out from Term 3 this year, will also see the delivery of workshops and new evidence-based resources for teachers and staff, helping them foster school environments inclusive for all students.

The Government's Australian-first \$1.6 billion Disability Inclusion reform has started rolling out in classrooms across Victoria – putting the needs of each individual student at the heart of our response and shifting the focus towards what a child can achieve, rather than what they can't.

As part of this new approach, new facilitators are helping schools and families work together to identify each student's unique strengths and how to best support their learning and participation – meaning schools will be able to better plan and adjust support for students throughout all stages of their education.

The record investment is also doubling the number of students receiving extra support in the classroom to 55,000 – and is expected to create up to 1,730 jobs across the state by 2025.

All government schools across the Barwon, Loddon Campaspe and Bayside Peninsula areas are already benefitting from the reform, with Outer Eastern Melbourne, Central Highlands and Mallee to join the program this year with more regions will be added each year until the reform is complete across Victoria in 2025.

The *Victorian Budget 22/23* also included \$326 million to deliver upgrades for 36 special schools – meaning every government special school will have had a major upgrade since we were elected in 2014.

Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"We can always do more to support students with disability at school – with these new resources from Get Skilled Access, we're building our school communities' understanding of disability to make every single Victorian school an inclusive one."

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"Our kids are far more than their diagnosis. We're rolling out our nation-first Disability Inclusion reform to completely change the way we support children in our schools – focusing on what they can achieve, rather than what they can't."

Quotes attributable to Australian of the Year and Get Skilled Access founder Dylan Alcott AO

“My purpose as Australian of the Year, and everyday after, is to help people change their perceptions of disability and lift their expectations of what they think people with disability can do.

That’s why the Abilities Awareness in Schools partnerships is important, it will build inclusive school cultures which is how we can improve perceptions and lift expectations.”