

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Education

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KEEPING SCHOOLS SAFE WITH FREE RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring schools and early childhood centres can stay safe and open through terms 3 and 4 with the distribution of free Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs), helping limit the spread of COVID-19 while also easing cost of living pressures for families.

Up to 46.4 million RATs will be provided to schools and early childhood services, ensuring the continuation of face-to-face learning while keeping students and staff as safe as possible.

Mainstream schools and early childhood services will be allocated three packs of five RATs for every student and staff member per term, while six packs of five RATs per term will be allocated to students and staff in specialist settings, recognising the higher risk of severe illness for medically vulnerable children.

The Labor Government provided more than 80 million RATs to schools and early childhood services throughout Term 1 and 2.

In addition, as part of the Government's \$190 million plan to keep classrooms safe, more than 105,000 air purifiers have been distributed to 1,587 government schools and almost 25,000 to 620 non-government schools since term 4 last year, helping to reduce instances of classroom transmission.

Primary and secondary school students and staff, and early childhood education and care staff and children aged 3 to 5 are recommended to test at home if they experience COVID-19 symptoms or are a contact of a confirmed case.

Vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 and booster shots for people over 16 years old remain the best way to protect students and staff. Throughout this period, we will continue to support efforts to get as many children vaccinated as possible.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

"We have kept our promise to ensure school doors have remained open from the beginning of term 1, and free RAT's will stay to keep students and staff safe and learning face-to-face continues."

"We thank teachers, parents and students for their hard work in keeping each other safe during this time – whether it's setting up new purifiers, to getting your child vaccinated or staying home if unwell."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt

"Keeping our littlest learners in early childhood services is so important which is why we're ensuring every family and all staff members have access to free RAT tests through Term 3 & 4"