

Victorian Budget 2023/24



The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Education

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep

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THE BEST START IN LIFE FOR EVERY YOUNG VICTORIAN

From kinder, to great local schools, all the way to TAFE and uni – education changes lives.

And from new schools to easing the cost of living for busy working families, the Andrews Labor Government is doing what matters for young Victorians – investing \$4.9 billion in the Education State through the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*.

With 90 per cent of a child’s brain developing before the age of five, early education has a profound effect on the way our kids develop. We know kinder gives the youngest Victorians the very best start in life and gives parents – particularly working mums – the choice to do what’s best for their families.

That’s why we promised to deliver Three-Year-Old Kinder, and to make kinder free – promises we’ve kept. Three and four-year-old Victorian children can now access between five and 15 hours of free kinder a week, saving families up to \$2,500 per child each year.

We’ve already invested \$4.4 billion in our once-in-a-generation *Best Start, Best Life* and *Three-Year-Old Kindergarten* reforms. With this Budget, we’ll build on that with another \$1.8 billion – bringing our investment up to \$6.2 billion.

We’ll end the dreaded double drop-off for more Victorian families, with \$1.2 billion for new kinders at or near government schools, new kinders at low-fee non-government schools, alongside new and expanded kinders on local government sites.

We’ll give more families across Victoria access to local, affordable childcare – investing to establish the first of 50 government-owned and operated, affordable integrated Early Learning Centres, which will open from 2025, while \$10 million in Building Blocks Improvement Grants will help upgrade kinders across the state.

A \$546.4 million package will support the continued expansion of Three-Year-Old Kinder and the introduction of Pre-Prep and continue Free Kinder across the state – including support for Aboriginal community organisations and Traditional Owners to improve cultural safety and inclusion in early childhood services.

We’ll invest \$47.8 million to open eight new toy libraries, start 10 new bilingual kindergartens, and continue the Early Childhood Language Program, while establishing 150 more Bush Kinder programs each year and providing grants to kindergartens across the state to purchase new toys and equipment.

Victorian schools are the backbone of the *Education State*. In this Budget, we’ll invest \$3.1 billion in our schools. This includes commitments to ease the workload of our dedicated teachers, support student mental health and learning outcomes, and deliver six tech schools to prepare students for the jobs of the future.

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We promised we'd build 100 new schools across the state – and by day one of term one in 2024, we'll have 75 schools delivered in some of our fastest-growing areas.

This Budget invests more than \$2.1 billion to build more schools and upgrade existing ones – building better learning spaces and creating more than 3,800 local construction jobs.

A \$741.4 million investment will support six new schools to open in 2025 and three more in 2026, planning and early works for a further three schools opening in 2026, extra stages at two recently opened schools and land acquisition for schools we know our growing suburbs will need in the coming years.

There is \$355.8 million for important upgrades at 47 schools – with a further \$24 million for 54 schools to start planning their major upgrade works, and \$331 million for critical school maintenance – ensuring safe, modern and properly maintained facilities.

A \$10 million fund will support small-scale priority building projects through the Minor Capital Works Fund, while another \$10 million round of the Inclusive Schools Fund will provide small building projects to promote inclusion of students of all abilities.

We're supporting low-fee Catholic and Independent schools alongside public education, with \$450 million for a grants program to build better facilities. Catholic schools will receive at least 70 per cent of this investment.

We'll build on last year's \$779 million recruitment package with a further \$204.8 million to recruit more teachers and retain existing staff, and provide more support for pre-service teachers – preparing the next generation of staff for the workforce.

Reducing the workload for government schools and teachers, a further \$39.6 million will support high-quality lesson plans and new professional development opportunities.

Too many parents of children living with disability feel like they're navigating a system that has been set up to fail kids and their families. On top of our existing \$1.6 billion Disability Inclusion program, we'll deliver a \$202.9 million package for students with disability, designed in consultation with their parents and carers.

New NDIS navigators will work for families – helping them navigate the system and get the support their kids deserve. We'll also introduce incentives for talented staff to work in rural and regional special schools, new extracurricular activities for students, more therapy pools and more assistance animals.

We'll make it easier for families with students at both mainstream and special schools, with \$31.9 million to keep the Students with Disabilities Transport Program going.

And for kids with additional needs at kinder, an \$18.1 million investment will modernise and tailor their support – making sure they can reap the benefits of early childhood education.

To help Victorian families with the cost of living, \$168.7 million will support the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund so students from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds aren't held back from activities with their friends.

Another \$105.4 million will back the School Breakfast Clubs program, Affordable School Uniforms initiative and Glasses for Kids Program, so students have the essentials they need to succeed.

We'll keep vulnerable students engaged with their learning, with \$20.1 million for Refugee Education Support, \$19.9 million for targeted support for students to remain in learning and \$13.3 million to engage at-risk youth.

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Jobs in STEM are the careers of the future. We'll prepare students for those pathways with \$116 million to build six new Tech Schools across Victoria, providing around 62,000 extra secondary students with access to high-tech experiences, alongside \$19.1 million for work experience placements in in-demand areas like clean energy.

We'll keep supporting high-ability students to thrive, backing the \$16.5 million Student Excellence Program in government schools – and we'll improve student achievement, engagement and wellbeing with tailored place-based education plans in Greater Shepparton, Frankston North and Doveton.

A \$15.5 million investment will support girls' health at school with free period products, while \$14.1 million will deliver critical health, wellbeing and inclusion services to schools. A further \$10.6 million will boost anti-bullying initiatives in schools across the state to keep students happy and healthy.

Quote attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

“Every Victorian child deserves a great education – we’re doing what matters for Victorian families, backing our hardworking school staff and improving student outcomes right across the state.”

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

“Our nation-leading early childhood reforms are giving every Victorian child the best start in life, while putting more money into the pockets of hard-working families and encouraging new parents back into the workforce.”