

Wednesday, 7 June 2023

THE BEST EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

The Andrews Labor Government is supporting families and children living with disability, providing better access to the services young Victorians need to learn and succeed from the first day of their education to their very last.

Backing more inclusive education and support for families, the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invests \$235 million to support students and children with disability or additional needs in school – ensuring more students have easier access to the services they need to thrive.

The investment builds on the Labor Government’s \$1.6 billion *Disability Inclusion* reforms in schools, supporting specialist out of school hours care facilities, support for families to navigate the NDIS, more support animals and hydrotherapy pools at specialist schools and specialised kinder equipment and support.

Families of children living with disability know how challenging it can be to navigate a system that feels like it’s been set up to fail them – so we’re investing \$21.2 million to introduce NDIS Navigators into all specialist schools by the end of 2025, with the first 30 to be introduced this year.

Supporting more students with the infrastructure they need, a \$25 million investment will deliver hydrotherapy pools at specialist schools, with expressions of interest opening in term 3.

We’re also supporting families juggling busy schedules by making it easier for students to get to school, with a \$31.8 million investment providing specialist transport through the Students with Disabilities Transport program.

Making it easier for parents and carers to access the additional support they need, \$121.7 million will continue and expand High Intensity Outside School Hours Care across 30 specialist schools.

Support animals provide specialised care to children with disability – and we’re supporting the training of more therapy animals, with an extra \$4.8 million to make sure kids who would benefit from an animal can get one, enhancing their learning, health and overall wellbeing.

From little improvements that make a big difference, to upgrades that can change a student’s entire school experience, we’re investing a further \$20 million in grants to deliver upgrades and improvements that better support inclusion at schools, including playground and facility upgrades.

These latest initiatives add to \$3 billion the Labor Government has already invested in inclusive education, including upgrades to every single specialist school in the state, more support for students in the classroom and facilities so every child gets the chance to play, learn and grow, no matter their needs.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“Victorian students deserve access to a great local school close to home with the resources and services they need to thrive – we’re making sure that’s a reality for every kid, no matter their additional needs.”

“We’re delivering the biggest reform to disability support in our schools Victoria has ever seen, creating better supports for families while delivering stronger educational outcomes for more students across the state.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

“Everyone deserves to be able to fully participate in school and these investments are making sure that students with disability and additional needs are given the tools and supports to be their best.”

Media contact: Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au