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HELPING SCHOOL FAMILIES WITH THE COST OF LIVING

Families across Victoria are facing growing cost of living pressures – and the Andrews Labor Government is making sure no student goes without nutritious food, vital school equipment or the extra-curricular activities and experiences kids deserve at school.

Visiting Footscray Primary School's breakfast club, Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins today announced the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invests \$289 million to help families with school costs.

From healthy breakfasts, lunches and holiday food packs to extra support to attend camps and sports events or help with uniforms and other essential items, the Labor Government is standing with families who need it.

Kids can't learn well on an empty stomach, so this package includes \$69.5 million to continue the popular School Breakfast Club Program, which has delivered more than 30 million free breakfasts and lunches to students since the program began in 2016.

As cost-of-living pressures have increased, demand for the program has grown by 40 per cent in the last 12 months – with Foodbank Victoria supplying 2.4 million extra meals to 1,000 schools across the state.

With school holidays fast approaching, the program also provides home supply packs for families who need extra support outside of term-time, as well as interactive cooking classes focused on healthy and accessible meal choices for families in 100 school communities.

A further \$32.9 million will go towards State Schools' Relief to continue the Affordable School Uniforms Program, which will provide around 1 million uniforms and other essential school items – like textbooks, swimming items and school bags - to families experiencing disadvantage.

Students shouldn't face barriers to the excitement of a school camp and a few nights away from home. An extra \$168.7 million for the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund will give more than 200,000 students whose families hold concession cards the opportunity to take part in activities with their friends.

Free glasses are being offered through the Glasses for Kids program, with new funding of \$2.9 million to offer screening to tens of thousands of little Victorian learners – recognising that vision impairment is a huge barrier to kids learning effectively, but one that is too often ignored.

Victoria was the first state or territory to ensure all students at government schools have access to free pads and tampons, and a further \$15.5 million will continue this nation-leading initiative – reducing the discomfort and embarrassment around periods for girls – and saving families hundreds of dollars every year.

Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"Cost-of-living pressures are hitting young families hard, but we're stepping in to provide free meals, uniforms and other essential items so that Victorian students can focus on what matters – learning and playing."

Quote attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

"Kids need a full stomach and the right equipment to get the most out of school – that's why we're providing extra funding to keep vital programs like School Breakfast Clubs, Affordable Uniforms and Glasses for Kids going."

Quote attributable to Foodbank Victoria CEO Dave McNamara

"Not being able to feed your kids is an unfathomable thought for many parents so initiatives like the School Breakfast Clubs program ease the emotional burden for mums and dads, and kids get the nourishment they need."

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