

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Women



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MORE HYDROTHERAPY POOLS FOR SPECIALIST SCHOOLS

Victorian specialist schools can now apply to build a hydrotherapy pool at their school, thanks to a \$25 million Andrews Labor Government investment.

Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins today visited Southern Autistic School in East Bentleigh to announce applications are now open for schools to apply for a pool through the Hydrotherapy Pools for Specialist Schools Fund, which supports government specialist schools to plan, design and build new hydrotherapy pools.

The Labor Government has delivered \$7.3 million, two-stage redevelopment of Southern Autistic School, which is now open – including new classrooms and specialist spaces for music and food tech, an administration building, a library and canteen.

The Hydrotherapy Pools for Specialist Schools Fund will support the construction of around 7 new pools, building on the 25 pools already in use across metropolitan Melbourne, regional and rural Victoria.

Hydrotherapy is a valuable treatment for children and young people with disability, offering a host of benefits including improving physical health and wellbeing.

Having access to a hydrotherapy pool for these important treatments at school minimises the need for students to take time away from school for appointments and reduces the travel burden on parents and carers – and schools can also share pool facilities with neighbouring specialist schools.

The \$25 million Hydrotherapy Pool for Specialist Schools Fund is part of a wider \$235 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* to support students with disability or additional needs in schools.

This includes \$121.7 million to continue and expand High Intensity Outside School Hours Care across 30 specialist schools, \$21.2 million to introduce NDIS Navigators into all specialist schools by the end of 2025, and \$31.8 million to providing specialist transport through the Students with Disabilities Transport program.

Applications for the Hydrotherapy Pool for Specialist Schools Fund can be made at schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/hydrotherapy-pools-for-specialist-schools-fund. Applications close on 6 October.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

“We are reducing the burden on parents and carers to access hydrotherapy treatments for their child by providing these facilities in more specialist schools.”

“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.”

“We encourage specialist schools to apply for a pool through the Hydrotherapy Pools for Specialist Schools Fund website.”