

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC



Friday, 6 May 2025

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

The Allan Labor Government is focused on what matters most – delivering real cost of living help to families in need and supporting all students to get a world-class education.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today visited St Albans East Primary School to announce a \$6 million expansion of The Smith Family's Learning for Life program, which provides financial help to low-income families and keeps our most vulnerable students engaged at every stage of their education.

The extension will support an additional 4000 students over four years through the program, which already helps almost 15,000 students across the state.

The program supports students from low-income families to remain engaged in learning and achieve their potential, focusing on improving learning, wellbeing, achievement, Year 12 completion and post-school engagement in education, employment and training.

The program includes initiatives aimed at easing financial burdens on families, helping with the cost of school essentials like uniforms, books, and excursions.

Families receive guidance and advice from a dedicated Learning for Life Coordinator, to make sure students and their families have the practical and emotional support they need throughout their education.

The program also delivers access to a range of programs to improve student engagement in education, including literacy and numeracy programs, learning clubs, careers and digital inclusion programs.

The Learning for Life program has proven to be highly effective. Over 80 per cent of participating students, who completed Year 12 in 2022, were in work, study or training in the 18 months after leaving school. A further 12 per cent were looking for work or volunteering.

The Smith Family has a strong presence in outer metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria where it supports 40,000 children, young people, parents and carers each year.

The Smith Family is partnering with the Allan Labor Government to achieve the shared goal of improving educational achievement and post-school participation in employment, education and training.

This real cost of living help is on top of the ongoing support delivered by the Labor Government – with free public transport for kids from next year, free school breakfasts, free vision screening and glasses through Glasses for Kids, free dental checkups with Smile Squad, free swimming lessons and free pads and tampons in government schools.

The *Victorian Budget 2025/26* also invests to significantly increase the amount of funds eligible students can receive through the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund, helping students to join camps, go on excursions and play on a team with their friends – making sure no student misses out.

Quotes attributable to Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll

"Education should never be out of reach because of financial hardship. This expansion means thousands more students will get the support they need to thrive."

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"The Learning for Life program has already made a profound difference, and with this investment, even more students and their families will have access to vital resources and guidance."

"We're delivering real cost-of-living relief so families can focus on what matters most – giving their kids the best possible start in life."

Quote attributable to Member for St Albans Natalie Suleyman

"This is a wonderful initiative that is providing local students with the support they need to thrive."

Quotes attributable to The Smith Family Victoria General Manager Anton Leschen

"The Smith Family's Learning for Life program works with some of the state's most vulnerable students and we thank The Victorian State Government for its decision to help us support thousands more students who need access to the essentials for learning, like books, bags and uniforms as well as extra learning support so they can keep up with their peers."

"We want all students to have the same access to education and feel supported to create meaningful future pathways and the long-term support of our program contributes to that in a demonstratable way."

"Given the scale of the need and the proven effectiveness of our program, the Victorian Government's funding commitment will be transformational for thousands more children experiencing disadvantage."

"Right now, one in six children in Victoria is living in poverty. All children need support for their education, but poverty creates extra barriers for children experiencing disadvantage. The Smith Family provides support to help children, and their families overcome these obstacles, empowering them to create better futures for themselves."