



media release

5 May 2017

Victorian State Budget: Big Boost for Early Childhood

The Victorian Government is set to spend millions on early childhood education that will support children and families in vulnerable circumstances.

"It is great to see a Victorian Budget that is walking the talk in early childhood. This budget contains welcome funding mechanisms which will support holistic approaches to children's learning, development and wellbeing." says Dr Anne Kennedy, Chairperson of Community Child Care Association (CCC).

CCC welcomes strong investment in this year's State Budget that is targeted directly at early childhood education services, as well as increased funding across several portfolios that will make a significant difference to thousands of families and children across Victoria.

"It is fantastic to see a Government that is prepared to use a healthy fiscal position to build a stronger and more equitable society. The Government is investing millions in early years services, child protection and family violence initiatives which will make a real difference to children in vulnerable circumstances," said Dr Kennedy.

The important early childhood education initiatives in the 2017/18 Victorian State Budget include:

- \$55.3 million over 4 years for a new school readiness fund – an innovative needs-based kindergarten funding model
- \$10 million to build early childhood facilities co-located at primary schools
- \$3.1 million this year for Early Start Kindergarten – providing no cost or low cost three-year-old kindergarten for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and for children in contact with child protection services
- \$2.3 million for pre-purchased places in kindergarten for children in vulnerable circumstances
- Funding to improve the quality of kindergartens, including access for services to coaching, training and advice

Dr Kennedy believes the new school readiness funding is one of the budget's biggest highlights.

"This is needs-based funding for kindergartens including long day care services with a kindergarten program. It will provide targeted assistance to services and communities who need it the most and will pay for additional support such as speech therapy, access to a psychologist, coaching for staff or community outreach."

"For some time now we have been advocating for a multidisciplinary approach to supporting children. Too often, matching government funding with what communities need is like trying to fit square pegs in round holes. This new program seems to have flexibility, allowing it be used in different ways depending on needs".

CCC is proud to have been part of an ongoing conversation about the importance of the early and middle years on children's long-term development and believes we still have a way to go. Children in vulnerable



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circumstances need access to these sorts of programs at all stages of early childhood not just in their kindergarten years.

“We can still see some gaps between the walk and the talk when it comes to early and middle childhood policy and funding. Resourcing early learning centres, family day care and outside school hours care services to provide these holistic approaches to all children right from infancy through primary school is the next step”

For further comment:

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Chairperson

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