

Early Childhood Management Services

Media Release
Thursday 4 May 2017

Victoria leads the way with *Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan*

Victoria's largest not-for-profit early childhood education provider, ECMS, commends the Victorian Government's *Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan*, released on Tuesday alongside the 2017-18 State budget.

ECMS Chief Executive Officer Bernie Nott says, "We welcome the Victorian Government's decision to invest \$202.1 million in initiatives that will improve outcomes for all young children and families.

"This represents our state's most significant investment in early childhood in many years, and we believe Victoria is leading the way nationally in early childhood policy."

Education begins in the early years, and the *Early Childhood Reform Plan* demonstrates the strong and progressive commitment from the Victorian Government to lead the nation in becoming Australia's Education State. The reform plan outlines the Government's commitment to creating a higher quality, more equitable and inclusive early childhood system. The government's roadmap policy development in consultation with the early childhood sector and stakeholders including ECMS has led to a platform of investment that provides all children opportunities to reach their full potential.

"We've long advocated for a strong needs-based approach to funding early education," says Mr Nott. "That is why we believe this reform agenda is a step in the right direction, with a focus on quality and lifting outcomes for all children and families, but particularly for our most vulnerable families."

In an Australian first, Victoria will invest \$55.3m in school readiness for kindergartens **based on children's level of need** to enable practical, evidence-based interventions that lift the quality of education.

The plan includes more than \$8 million investment in increasing vulnerable children's participation in three-year-old kindergarten, via the existing Early Start Kindergarten and pre-purchased kindergarten places initiatives.

"We're pleased the reform agenda recognises the importance of increased participation in kindergarten and additional learning support for children in need," says Mr Nott.

"We know that the longer children spend in a high-quality early learning environments, the better their long-term outcomes. Research tells us that participation in a high-quality kindergarten program has lasting impacts on children's opportunities for life-long civic participation irrespective of life circumstances. ¹"

ECMS fully endorses the investment to build parents' confidence, skills and capabilities with the announcement of \$22.3 million to create an additional 750 supported playgroups across the state.

"We look forward to working closely with the government on rolling out these important initiatives, and providing early learning environments that enable all Victorian children and families to reach their potential."

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¹ *Two Years Are Better Than One: Developing a Preschool Program for Australian 3 Year Olds - Evidence, Policy and Implementation* (2016) Mitchell Institute Policy Paper No. 03/2016 www.mitchellinstitute.org.au;

Research / reference material is available on request

About ECMS:

ECMS is a not-for-profit community enterprise providing quality early childhood education and care for children, families and communities in 70 services across Melbourne. Our services touch the lives of approximately 6500 children and families in many varied and diverse communities each week.

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