

# 2025–2029 Strategic Plan

Department of Education



## Acknowledgment of Country

The department proudly acknowledges Victoria's First Nations communities as the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands, waters and skies, and pays respect to all Elders past and present.

We recognise First Nations people as Victoria's first educators, artists and scientists, and we value the ongoing contribution of First Nations people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us all.

We also commit to work together to deliver the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination, Truth and Treaty.

## Language statement

Throughout this publication the terms 'Koorie' or 'First Nations' are used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms 'Aboriginal' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are retained in the names of programs and data references.

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### Cover photos

1. Kinglake Ranges Children's Centre
2. KELiS, Elizabeth Murdoch College
3. Northern College of the Arts and Technology (NCAT)

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## Section 1

# Message from the Secretary

I am pleased to present our Strategic Plan for 2025–2029, which is guided by our vision for 'A great education for every child and young person – so they can thrive now, and in the future, for a fairer, smarter and more prosperous state.'

The department is committed to enriching learning opportunities and giving all Victorian children and young people equitable access to a quality education. This strategy informs where we will focus our effort and attention.

We want all First Nations children, young people and their families and carers to be empowered by an education system that celebrates culture, supports choice and control, and upholds the rights of First Nations people.

This plan has been refreshed to better reflect our commitment to prioritise self-determination and strengthen cultural safety. This commitment is reflected in all our reforms. We are embedding First Nations history, culture and perspectives in teaching and learning, and driving change across our workforce, so that our early childhood education services, schools and workplaces are culturally responsive and inclusive.

We are transforming early childhood education through our Best Start, Best Life reforms, providing more access to high-quality early childhood education and care services.

Early Learning Victoria was established within the department to set up and operate 50 government-owned early learning and childcare centres by 2032. The first 4 centres opened in January 2025, providing childcare and Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs.

Pre-Prep is expanding Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. Over the next 5 years, Pre-Prep will be available to children across almost all areas of regional and rural Victoria, as well as to those who are likely to benefit most, wherever they live across the state.

Free Kinder is offering more opportunities for 3- and 4-year-old children to learn and socialise through play.

Child safety is a key outcome of the department. We are committed to strengthening our child safety policy, guidance, training, regulatory approaches and support for schools and early childhood education and care services, to keep Victorian children safe.

*The Education State – Excellence in Every Classroom* sets out the key priorities for Victoria's education system.

We are supporting excellence in teaching and learning by ensuring teachers have the resources and support they need so that every student can build knowledge across all areas of the curriculum.

We have refreshed the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM 2.0), providing schools with evidence-based practices and approaches to achieve strong learning outcomes for students. The VTLM 2.0's teaching and learning practices will be in place in all Victorian government schools by 2028. Victoria's new reading position will be implemented in all government schools by the start of 2027.



Photo: Koorie Curriculum Showcase Day, Geelong

We will continue to deliver reforms in wellbeing, mental health and inclusion so that every student can participate fully at school. Our major senior secondary reforms are elevating vocational and applied learning through the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Vocational Major (VM), Victorian Pathways Certificate, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools and School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. Students now have more opportunities to complete a secondary school certificate and explore the pathways that match their aspirations.

Alongside this we are delivering excellent careers education, and more work-based learning opportunities for students before senior secondary school. We are strengthening support for student wellbeing, engagement, and learning, including exploring opportunities for students in years 7 to 9 to lift secondary school student engagement and achievement.

As Victoria's population growth continues, the department will acquit the government's commitment to deliver 100 new schools by 2026 and continue to deliver more new schools, and expand and upgrade existing ones. We will also continue to support principals and schools to undertake essential maintenance, so every community has a great local school.

Growth in early childhood infrastructure will continue to be a significant focus for the department. This includes building kindergarten and early childhood facilities on school sites, strengthening transitions and making drop-off easier for families.

Expanding, supporting and recognising our early childhood and schools workforce remains a top priority. We are focusing our efforts on recruiting, retaining and supporting the development of educators and teachers. This includes support for pre-service teachers and graduates, and expanding our First Nations workforce.

We are continuing to prioritise the wellbeing and safety of our schools workforce, including by reducing administrative burden and providing flexible working arrangements.

We all have an important role to play in delivering our strategic plan, so the next generation can grow and thrive. I thank everyone across the sector for your commitment to Victoria's children and young people.

**Tony Bates**

Secretary, Department of Education

## Section 2

# Department overview

### What we do

The department is responsible for early childhood and school education in Victoria through the provision of a wide range of learning and development support and services.

The department provides policy leadership, plans for the future of education in Victoria and leads key cross-sector collaboration.

The department plays an important system steward role by providing support, guidance, oversight and assurance across early childhood and school education systems, as well as directly providing school education and early learning.

### Early childhood (Birth to 8 years)



Early childhood education and care services, with a focus on kindergarten programs



More than **147,000** children funded to attend kindergarten programs

- over **69,000** children attend a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program
- over **78,000** children attend a Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program



More than **5,000** regulated education and care services of all types



Approximately **3,000** funded kindergarten services

### School education (5 to 18 years)



Primary education



Secondary education



Special education



Language



More than **1,063,000** students

- approximately **666,000** students in government schools
- approximately **219,000** students in Catholic schools
- approximately **178,000** students in Independent schools



**1,575** government schools



**725** non-government schools



## Who we work with

The department and its portfolio entities work collaboratively with a diverse range of public, private and not-for-profit providers serving Victorian children and young people.

### Education portfolio partners and authorities include:

- Disciplinary Appeals Boards
- Independent Office of School Dispute Resolution
- Merit Protection Boards
- Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)
- Victorian Institute of Teaching
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

### Key stakeholder groups include:

- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and First Nations communities
- Advocacy and special interest groups
- Early childhood and school education experts
- Early childhood and school education peak bodies
- Government department and agencies
- Industry associations and unions
- Parents and students

Photo: Koorie Curriculum Showcase Day, Geelong



## Section 3

# Strategic direction

### Our vision

A great education for every child and young person – so they can thrive now, and in the future, for a fairer, smarter and more prosperous state.



### Our outcomes

Our outcomes clarify the impact we want to see from the collective efforts of the department.



Outcome	Why it matters
<b>Learning and development</b> Excellent learning and development outcomes. Strong engagement and wellbeing for all Victorian children and young people.	Learning and development are central to our ambition for education services and support. The evidence shows a strong sense of wellbeing enables children to engage positively and confidently with their environment and take full advantage of learning opportunities. Quality of teaching matters for year-on-year student progression and achievement, and for child development more broadly.
<b>Equity and inclusion</b> Equitable and inclusive education and care for all Victorian children and young people.	Every child and young person has the fundamental human right to education, so that they can fully participate in society and achieve their potential. Many learners face significant barriers to their learning and development that are outside their control and too often affect their life outcomes. Targeted and effective support is needed to ensure education is equitable and inclusive, so that every child and young person can thrive.

Photo: Senior secondary pathways, Ringwood

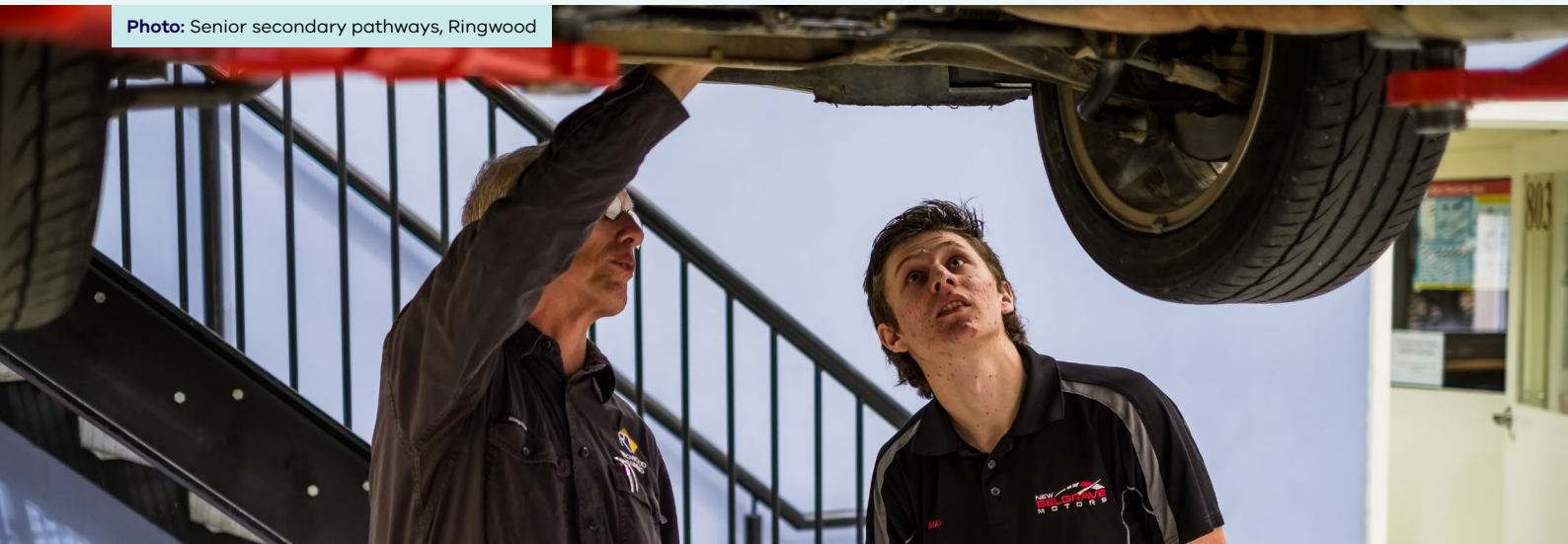






Photo: Footscray Park Primary School

## Outcome

## Why it matters

### Pathways and opportunities

Children and young people have pathways through education to future careers. Victorian parents and carers are supported to participate in the workforce.

The individual journey through education settings looks different for every child and young person. It is important that pathways are in place for every learner to reach a variety of careers they may aspire to. Helping parents and carers to work and study supports their economic participation, their goals for themselves and their families, and has a positive influence on their children's aspirations and the pathways they choose to take.

### Child safety

Children and young people are safe from harm throughout their education. Staff are well equipped to keep children safe and identify early signs of child safety risk or harm

Children and young people should be able to live a life free of sexual and physical abuse, serious emotional harm, psychological harm and neglect. The care of children is of paramount importance and requires constant vigilance. This requires oversight, proactive strategies, enhanced child safety capabilities and strong support to schools to meet Child Safe Standards.

## Our objectives<sup>1</sup>



### Objective 1

Raise development outcomes of 3- and 4-year-old children prior to attending school.

### Objective 2

Raise learning, development, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for all Victorian students.

### Objective 3

Provide equitable and inclusive schooling to all Victorian students.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) (2025) 2025–26 Victorian Budget, [Budget Paper No. 3 – Service Delivery](#).

## Section 4

## Guiding principles and values



## Guiding principles

Our guiding principles describe how we will approach our work and the culture we will foster.

Guiding principle	Why it matters
<b>Hearts in, minds on</b> We bring our passion, knowledge and skills to improve outcomes.	Our people are passionate and knowledgeable, and we want to encourage every person to bring their whole self to work. When we put our 'hearts in' and 'minds on' it means we are authentic and make connections that are positive and impactful.
<b>Our best work matters</b> We do high-quality work that matters to people's lives.	Our efforts to do high-quality work means we follow the steps to get it right, we involve the right people, and we hold ourselves to the highest standards. This approach to delivering high-quality work directly leads to greater impact.
<b>Be curious and work together</b> We listen, collaborate and value challenge and diversity.	Our inclusive and collaborative approach to working with our colleagues, partners and stakeholders brings in different perspectives and builds confidence. This is important for arriving at well-considered conclusions that are also well-supported.
<b>Seize the day</b> We are proactive, seek to solve problems and adapt to deliver.	Our commitment to be proactive, to solve problems and adapt is what helps us to deliver positive change. From marginal improvements all the way up to transformational reform, we seize the day and take the initiative to push our work forwards.
<b>See the whole picture</b> We are guided by evidence and seek to understand the broader context.	Our perspectives and discussions are shaped by the evidence of what works and are informed by our broader understanding of the context and system at play. This ability to see the whole picture improves our work and our influence on achieving better outcomes.

## Victorian Public Sector values

Our Victorian public sector values describe the behaviour that the Victorian Government and community expect of us and are codified in the *Public Administration Act 2004*. These values ensure we are fair, objective and courteous in all our dealings.



Responsiveness



Integrity



Impartiality



Accountability



Respect



Leadership



Human Rights

## Section 5

# Operating environment, key challenges and opportunities

Within our operating environment, challenges and opportunities influence the department's planning, implementation and delivery of services and system reform.

## The economy

Throughout 2025, global economic markets have fluctuated significantly, driven by international tariffs and trade policy uncertainty and rising geopolitical tensions.

Locally, the Victorian economy continues to grow, and the government continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to investing in the early childhood and education portfolios.

Given the rising costs of goods, services, and construction, the department will continue to seek efficiencies in how it delivers its infrastructure programs and provides high-quality services, and give cost-of-living relief to families through a range of education and early learning programs.

## Climate change

Victoria's climate is changing, which means we will continue to experience rising temperatures and more frequent and intense extreme weather events that present risks to our infrastructure, service delivery and people.

Our experience with responding to extreme weather events has improved our ability to minimise disruption to learning and support staff, children and students, and to recover from these events. We will continue to take action to ensure our infrastructure can withstand climate impacts and protect our people from the impacts of climate extremes.

The department and all schools and early childhood education settings have a role to play in delivering on the Victorian target of net zero emissions by 2045 through improving energy efficiency, transitioning away from fossil fuels and using more electricity generated from renewable sources.

The department will support Victoria's commitment to building a clean economy workforce by strengthening clean energy career pathways through expanding the core offering of VET in schools, providing vocational explorer and VET taster experiences in the clean economy and investing in clean energy equipment and programs in Tech Schools.

## Self-determination

The Victorian Government is committed to delivering on Truth, Treaty and self-determination, providing the opportunity for significant positive change, including accelerating our actions to improve learning and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes of First Nations children and young people.

On average, First Nations students achieve lower National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results, report lower connectedness with school, and attend school less regularly than their non-First Nations peers. Cultural safety and access to targeted supports are critical to ensure First Nations learners achieve their potential, succeed in life, and feel strong in their cultural identity.

The department is prioritising self-determination in education to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations learners. We will continue to work with First Nations people and communities, building on our successes to realise the ambition of *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026* and the objectives of *Dhelk Wukang 2022–2026: Aboriginal Inclusion Plan*. We will also develop a new First Nations education plan, informed by the evaluation of Marrung.





Photo: VCE results, Coburg High School

## Digital security, transformation and disruption

How technology can be used within schools, early learning centres and at home is evolving quickly. Children and young people have greater access to internet-connected devices and social media. These are parts of contemporary life and present significant learning and teaching opportunities. However, they can also have negative consequences, such as online bullying and diminishing conflict resolution skills, which can impact mental health. Protections, instruction and monitoring are required to help keep children safe online.

The widespread take-up of generative artificial intelligence (AI) applications, such as ChatGPT, has sparked concern and debate about AI's productive potential and associated risks. Understanding how educators can best use AI, with instruction, supervision and critical assessment of AI-generated outputs, is important. The department is developing a clear AI strategy to support the existing Generative AI Policy for Schools, that sets out the requirements and advice around using AI tools in a safe and responsible way, complementing the Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools.

## Population and societal change

Our state is expected to continue to grow, with Victoria's population forecast to reach 10.3 million by 2051<sup>2</sup>. Over the long term, net overseas migration is expected to add more than 80,000 people to the population each year. Most of this projected growth is concentrated in the inner and outer growth areas of metropolitan Melbourne. In regional Victoria, the strongest growth is expected in Greater Geelong and Ballarat.

The Victorian Government's Housing Statement and Plan for Victoria seek to fast-track and concentrate housing development in priority precincts to accommodate the growing population. Such rapid growth creates a need for additional schools and expansions of existing schools, new and expanded kindergartens and early learning centres, and additional staff to cater for more children and young people. Identifying shifting growth patterns quickly and planning effectively for future needs will be critical to keep pace with increasing demand.

Changes in behavioural norms since the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to increased student absenteeism: parents and carers are continuing to follow health advice to keep children with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms at home. These absences are further enabled by the ability of carers to work from home. This interruption to consistent learning and engagement with the school environment poses challenges to student achievement and wellbeing.

2 Department of Transport and Planning (2023) [Victoria in Future](#)



Photo: South Gippsland Specialist School, Leongatha

## Workforce availability and capability

Victoria needs to attract, recruit and retain more teachers, educators and staff to address the significant demand within our schools and early learning settings. There is significant growth projected in early childhood and school education enrolments for Victoria. By 2029, Victoria is projected to require 118,565 teachers across the early childhood education, primary school and secondary school settings<sup>3</sup>. Supporting this growth will require more highly skilled teachers and educators to deliver quality education to children and students.

There is an additional challenge to attract and retain teachers and educators in rural and regional areas, in specialist schools and in Melbourne's urban growth corridors. There are also specific subject areas such as technology, science, mathematics and languages where demand is high.

The Best Start, Best Life reforms are significantly increasing the demand for early childhood professionals across the state. The department is implementing a comprehensive strategy to attract and retain this workforce, in partnership with the early childhood sector. We will ensure that all people involved in the provision of early childhood care and services have the appropriate training and support to maximise child safety.

Addressing school workforce supply challenges also requires departmental efforts on multiple fronts and key initiatives are already underway. We have invested in comprehensive supports to address key areas of staff concern, including

workload management, and improving career development and progression. Targeted teaching scholarships, paid placements, early career support and improved support for school staff mental health and wellbeing are already making a difference and having a positive impact on workforce supply, with further improvements expected in coming years.

## Information security and privacy

Information security and privacy vulnerabilities can affect all areas of society with significant implications for organisations large and small. High-profile data breaches are occurring more frequently, and this presents critical challenges for the school and early childhood education sectors to protect sensitive private information and ensure the safety of children in the online environment.

The department has built the capability to effectively prevent, detect and respond to inappropriate access to and use of information and technology. This includes establishing robust security protocols and protections, and the technology platforms needed to support schools and early learning centres to manage the complexity of information security and child safety online. We require that third parties who provide technology or information management services to schools, early learning centres and the department provide the same level of protection for education systems, student and family data and children's safety.

All staff are trained on the appropriate handling of personal information, and accurate and timely notifications of issues and breaches to and from affected services and suppliers.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Education (2024) [Victorian Teacher Workforce Snapshot 2023](#)



## Section 6

# Strategic reforms

## First Nations education

Prioritising self-determination and strengthening cultural safety is a key focus of our strategy. Self-determination is a fundamental enabler to lift education and wellbeing outcomes for Victoria's First Nations children and students.

We want to amplify the voices of First Nations children, young people, families and communities at all levels of decision-making to drive systemic change in early childhood and school education. This will connect, support and deliver better experiences and outcomes for First Nations people in Victoria. This work will continue in partnership with the Victorian Government's principal partner in First Nations education, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEI).

As *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026* and *Dhelk Wukang: Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2022–2026* enter their penultimate year, we reflect on our progress and celebrate what has been achieved. We also acknowledge there is opportunity and a great need to do more.

The principles of *Marrung* and *Dhelk Wukang* provide a strong foundation for ongoing partnership with First Nations communities. In 2025, *Marrung* will be evaluated to inform the development of a new First Nations education plan. We will also plan a review of *Dhelk Wukang* to confirm our forward approach for when it concludes in 2026. Our future work will build on *Marrung*'s vision and our work so far, and be informed by:

- recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission
- Victoria's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan

- the Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education report
- Statewide Treaty outcomes.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission provided us with an important opportunity to learn about the impact of colonisation. We are committed to implementing the Victorian Government's response to the recommendations.

The Strengthening Aboriginal Self-Determination in Education report reform directions – accountability, partnerships, truth-telling, voice, capacity building, and a culturally safe and responsive school system – will position the education system strongly to support self-determination and elevate the voices of First Nations learners and their communities.

To build on *Marrung*'s achievements, a crucial next step is legislative change. We are reviewing the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* to inform possible amendments to strengthen First Nations recognition and embed the principles of self-determination.

Under the leadership of our First Nations Strategy, Policy and Programs group, we are supporting Treaty negotiations and agreed commitments.

Our continuing reforms aim to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations children and young people, and support community control and choice. As part of the *Education State – Excellence in Every Classroom* strategy, we are strengthening First Nations history, culture and perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum. In the early childhood sector, we are prioritising Pre-Prep for First Nations children and continuing our partnership with VAEI to establish culturally safe and inclusive kinders that value and respect First Nations culture, children and families.

Photo: Koorie Curriculum Day, Geelong







Photo: Anne Sgro Children's Centre, Coburg

## Best Start, Best Life

The department is continuing to deliver the Best Start, Best Life reforms that will transform early childhood education in Victoria over the next decade.

Between 2025 and 2036, Pre-Prep will be rolled out across the state in stages. Once fully implemented, Pre-Prep will give children across Victoria access to up to 30 hours a week of kindergarten in the year before school. Led by qualified teachers, it provides greater opportunities to socialise and learn through play. A revised rollout plan provides more time to build the infrastructure and grow the workforce needed to support the reforms. The rollout prioritises children who will benefit the most from additional hours of kindergarten.

Pre-Prep successfully launched in 6 regional local government areas (LGAs) in 2025. In 2026, Pre-Prep will launch in 12 more regional LGAs and become available statewide to First Nations children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children who have had contact with Child Protection.

Free Kinder continues to be available for children enrolled in a kindergarten program, enabling greater participation for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Around 143,000 families benefited from this program in 2024, with a similar number expected to benefit in 2025. The rollout of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform is progressing successfully: more than 90% of services across the state now offer between 10 and 15 hours per week, and over 90% of all eligible children were enrolled in a program in 2024. We are ahead of schedule for the full implementation of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten by 2029.

The first 4 Victorian government-owned and operated early learning and childcare centres opened in 2025, with a further 14 centres on track to open in 2026. All centres will be open by 2032 in areas of greatest need, co-located with schools or other services such as TAFEs, hospitals and major employers. Where possible, the centres will include space for co-located services such as maternal and child health services and playgroups.

We will continue to deliver on the government's commitment to provide 180 new government-owned kindergartens, on or near school sites, with 8 of these new or expanded kindergartens already delivered. We will also continue to deliver kinders at non-government schools and support sector-delivered new and expanded early learning centres.



Photo: Vocational Major, NCAT, Preston

## School reform

Our next phase of school reforms will focus on continuing to realise the Education State vision: to deliver excellence in every classroom in every corner of the state.

Over the past 10 years, the department has delivered a substantial number of significant reforms and changes that have enhanced the experiences and outcomes of schooling. Future effort will build on these reforms to drive improved student outcomes.

In 2025, Victoria achieved the best overall NAPLAN results, had the largest improvement across all measures, and saw more Year 7 and 9 students achieving at the highest level in Numeracy. Despite these excellent overall results, there is still work to be done to lift outcomes for many students facing disadvantage across the state.

We will continue to deliver excellence in teaching and learning, with a focus on implementing the VTLM 2.0 in all government schools by 2028. The VTLM 2.0 is aligned with contemporary evidence about how students learn and has explicit teaching at its core.

High-quality Victorian Lesson Plans, including Phonics Plus, and professional learning programs aligned to the VTLM 2.0, will provide teachers with ready-to-use resources that reduce the burden of lesson preparation and support implementation of the Victorian Curriculum 2.0. We will continue to support government schools to implement Victoria's reading position by the start of 2027 and the 5 strategies in the mathematics position.

Education State reforms will also focus on supporting every student to succeed. Generational reforms in student mental health and wellbeing, and disability inclusion are continuing to be rolled out in schools and will become embedded over the next few years. Supporting families with the cost of education and promoting equal access to education is also a focus for our next phase of reform.

We are continuing the significant senior secondary school pathway reforms that are building the aspirations and skills of young people in Victoria. These reforms to secondary schooling will prepare students to embark on post-school pathways into careers that are rewarding and meet the needs of the modern economy. These reforms have supported growth in the





**Photo:** Head Start program, supporting school-based apprentices and trainees

proportion of students successfully completing the VCE (including the VCE VM) from 91.7% in 2021 to 97.5% in 2024.

Expanding, supporting and recognising our school workforce remains a priority. The Victorian Government's school workforce investment has contributed to there being over 12,000 more registered school teachers in Victoria in 2024 compared to 2020. Victoria's government teaching service also grew by over 1,500 (full-time equivalent) staff from June 2023 to June 2024. Since 2019, the Teacher Financial Incentives program has supported over 800 teachers to relocate to hard-to-staff roles.

We are also building the capability of teachers, including through the Career Start induction program, which supports graduate teachers through professional learning, mentoring, time release and networking opportunities with peers as they enter the profession.

We will continue to prioritise the wellbeing and safety of our workforce, including by considering the findings and recommendations from the Independent Review into administrative and compliance activities.

We are providing a high-quality, contemporary learning environment through the delivery of modern infrastructure, including building 123 new schools between 2017 and 2026, and delivering over 2,300 upgrade projects. We will also deliver high-quality digital foundations that are cybersafe and enable schools and teachers to deliver a modern educational offering.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA) Head Agreement, signed by the Victorian and the Australian governments in early 2025, supports delivery of the Education State. The agreement secures 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard for Victorian government schools by 2034 and sets out a suite of national reforms aimed at improving schooling outcomes for all Australian students.



## Section 7

# Focus areas and foundations



## Focus areas

To lift outcomes for all children and young people, we will focus on:



### Expanding early learning

Providing more hours of free, quality early learning for all children.



### Excellence in learning

Supporting schools and services to achieve better learning outcomes for children and young people.



### Strengthening safety, wellbeing and engagement

Having the right supports and services in place to meet the needs of each child and young person, including keeping them safe from harm.



### Prioritising self-determination and strengthening cultural safety

Improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations children and young people and supporting community control and choice.



### Addressing disadvantage and vulnerability

Enabling children and young people experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability to get the full benefit of education.



### Strengthening our teaching and education workforce

Growing and supporting our education and care workforces and supporting best practice in teaching.



## Foundations

To be successful our priorities will be:



### Our people

Supporting a strong culture of integrity, inclusion and high performance.



### Strong systems

Ensuring we have the right systems and business processes in place.



### Stewardship

Actively ensuring our sectors deliver outcomes, through our state-owned schools and services and by providing support, guidance, oversight and assurance across education and early childhood sectors.



### Physical infrastructure

Building and partnering to create and maintain contemporary, safe, and sustainable spaces.



### Partnerships and engagement

Building strong and effective partnerships across and with our sectors, families and carers.



### Resilience, mitigation and adaptation to climate change

Doing our bit to address climate change and ensuring continuity of learning in the event of natural disasters and emergency events.



## Expanding early learning

Description	Providing more hours of free, quality early learning for all children
<b>Strategic Plan Initiatives</b>	<p><b>1.1 Three-Year-Old Kindergarten:</b> Continue to roll out kindergarten programs for 3-year-olds across the state, growing to 15 hours by 2029.</p> <p><b>1.2 Pre-Prep:</b> Transition Four-Year-Old Kindergarten to 'Pre-Prep', increasing to a universal 30-hours a week program of play-based learning for every 4-year-old child in Victoria.</p> <p><b>1.3 New early learning centres:</b> Establish 50 Victorian government-owned and operated early learning centres, in areas of greatest need.</p>



## Excellence in learning

Description	Supporting schools and services to achieve better learning outcomes for children and young people
<b>Strategic Plan Initiatives</b>	<p><b>2.1 Best kindergartens for Victorian kids:</b> Provide grants for kindergartens to procure new or improved toys and equipment, Bush Kinder programs, toy libraries and expansion of bilingual kindergartens.</p> <p><b>2.2 Early years assessment and learning tool:</b> Provide teachers and co-educators with a new online observation-based tool that supports assessment of children's strengths, interests and abilities.</p> <p><b>2.3 Intensive school support:</b> Deliver intensive and tailored support to schools facing challenging and complex circumstances to ensure there is consistently strong practice across the government school system.</p> <p><b>2.4 Lifting student attainment – Excellence in mathematics education:</b> Support the implementation of Victoria's new mathematics position, strengthening mathematics teaching in government schools and improving numeracy outcomes.</p> <p><b>2.5 Lifting student attainment – Excellence in reading:</b> Support the implementation of Victoria's new reading position, strengthening evidence-based reading instruction in government schools and improving literacy outcomes.</p> <p><b>2.6 Lifting student attainment – Lesson plans:</b> Develop high-quality, sequenced lesson plans in priority curriculum areas to reduce administrative burden and ease workload pressure for teachers.</p> <p><b>2.7 Lifting student attainment – VTLM 2.0:</b> Implement the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0.</p> <p><b>2.8 Lifting student attainment – Small group learning support:</b> Provide small group learning support to students who are behind their age-expected literacy and numeracy standard.</p> <p><b>2.9 Lifting student attainment – Student Excellence Program:</b> Support high-ability students.</p> <p><b>2.10 New Tech Schools:</b> Build 6 new Tech Schools to provide free hands-on and immersive science, technology, engineering and maths learning experiences to more than 62,000 secondary school students.</p> <p><b>2.11 Senior Secondary Pathways Reform:</b> Integrate the VCE VM and the Victorian Pathways Certificate, make high-quality VET accessible to all Victorian students, develop pathways for students to engage with emerging industries and a consistent model for the effective delivery of meaningful vocational and applied learning pathways in all secondary schools.</p> <p><b>2.12 Strengthen student engagement and achievement in early secondary school:</b> Identify opportunities to invigorate Years 7 to 9 to foster early secondary student engagement, wellbeing, and achievement, including by improving access to a range of learning opportunities.</p>





## Strengthening safety, wellbeing and engagement

Description	Having the right supports and services in place to meet the needs of each child and young person, including keeping them safe from harm
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### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 3.1 Child safety:** Strengthen child safety policy, guidance, training and support for schools and early childhood education and care services, so that children and young people are safe, and staff are equipped to identify and respond to risk or harm.
- 3.2 Rapid Review into child safety in early childhood education and care settings and the Working with Children Check in Victoria (Rapid Review)**  
Implement relevant recommendations from the Rapid Review, led by Jay Weatherill AO and Pamela White PSM, to strengthen safety standards in early childhood education and care, to keep Victorian children safe. The Victorian Government agreed to adopt every recommendation of the Rapid Review and implement them as quickly as possible. This will build on the restrictions on the use of personal devices in childcare services already in place and the establishment of a register of early childhood educators to track employment history and patterns.
- 3.3 Inclusion in kinder:** Implement disability inclusion reforms, including more Preschool Field Officers, continuing the specialist equipment program, strengthening assessment processes, and designing and piloting a new strengths-based approach to support.
- 3.4 Kinder participation:** Improve kinder participation through strengthened local and statewide strategies, leveraging existing initiatives such as Compact, Early Childhood LOOKOUT, and School Readiness Funding. This will be supported through the establishment of kindergarten attendance data reporting and analysis processes using the new Arrival IT system.
- 3.5 Student mental health reforms:** Includes establishing a Schools Mental Health Fund supported by a menu of evidence-based initiatives, expanding the Mental Health in Primary Schools program, funding mental health and wellbeing leaders in every government and low-fee non-government school, and embedding mental health practitioners in every government secondary and specialist school.
- 3.6 Disability Inclusion:** Complete the statewide rollout of the Disability Inclusion reform in schools to help schools better identify and respond to the needs of students with disability.
- 3.7 Engaging students:** Strengthen strategic focus on improving school attendance and student engagement, supported by targeted efforts to increase the scale and scope of the Education Justice Initiative for students in (or at risk of) contact with the youth justice system and the Navigator program for chronically disengaged students. Continue LOOKOUT centre support and individual education supports for students in Out of Home Care.
- 3.8 Victorian Early Leaver Connection initiative:** Establish the Victorian Early Leaver Connection initiative to identify and support early school leavers to remain engaged in education and training and successfully complete a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. This initiative will provide career advice, additional support and strengthened Year 12 pathways at TAFE, including targeted support for early school leavers who are First Nations students or who have a disability.
- 3.9 Providing students with essentials:** Continue to deliver and expand School Breakfast Clubs, Affordable School Uniforms, Glasses for Kids and Free Period Products.



## Prioritising self-determination and strengthening cultural safety

### Description

Improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations children and young people, and supporting community control and choice.

### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 4.1 Cultural safety and inclusion in kinder:** Work with VAEAI on new approaches to establishing a culturally safe environment in all services, which values and respects First Nations culture, children and families.
- 4.2 Roll out Pre-Prep to Aboriginal children as a priority:** From 2026, children who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander will be eligible for between 16 and 25 hours a week of Pre-Prep.
- 4.3 Marrung – Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026:** Strengthen cultural inclusion and safety, and ensure equitable access to early childhood and education supports so that First Nations learners achieve their potential, succeed in life, and feel strong in their cultural identity.
- 4.4 Dhehk Wukang – Aboriginal Inclusion Plan:** Strengthen Aboriginal inclusion, self-determination and cultural safety at all levels within the department, including the Victorian public service and government teaching service.
- 4.5 Self-determination in education reforms:** Strengthen self-determination for First Nations learners and their families through building school capacity and practice in partnership with First Nations communities and organisations.
- 4.6 First Nations Employment Plan:** Attract and retain new and returning First Nations people to the schools, corporate and early childhood workforces. Continue to work with VAEAI on supporting First Nations people to become early childhood teachers and educators.
- 4.7 Support Treaty and Government Yoorrook response:** Support implementation of negotiated outcomes in the Statewide Treaty Agreement and coordinate the department's response to Yoorrook Justice Commission recommendations.
- 4.8 Self-determination in early childhood education:** Support and strengthen existing ACCOs delivering kindergarten and other childhood services and help establish more ACCO-delivered services so more First Nations families have this option for their children.





## Addressing disadvantage and vulnerability

### Description

Enabling children and people experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability to get the full benefits of education

### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 5.1 Fighting for students with disability and their families:** Provide more support for students with disability and their families, ensuring more students have better access to the services they need.
- 5.2 Roll out Pre-Prep to priority cohorts:** Priority cohorts of children will be eligible to receive between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep statewide:
  - from 2026, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children who have had contact with Child Protection.
  - from 2028, children (or guardians) who have a concession card, and children who are a multiple birth child.
- 5.3 Multicultural, multifaith, and culturally and linguistically diverse support:** Support multicultural and multifaith communities by expanding refugee education support programs, implementing the new anti-racism policy for schools, and continue support for students of African and Pasifika heritage through the Victorian African Communities Action Plan and place-based education initiatives.



## Strengthening our teaching and education workforce

### Description

Growing and supporting our education and care workforces and supporting best practice in teaching

### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 6.1 School workforce supply initiatives:** Continue attracting more people to our school education workforce and retaining existing staff by delivering programs such as Career Start, Teach Today and Teach Tomorrow, support for pre-service teachers and teacher financial incentives.
- 6.2 Improving school staff mental health and wellbeing support and reducing administrative workload:** Continue to prioritise the wellbeing of our school workforce by implementing initiatives to improve government school staff mental health. Consider the recommendations of the Independent Review into administrative and compliance activities in government schools and begin delivering 6 of the review's recommendations for the 2026 school year.
- 6.3 Best Start, Best Life workforce strategy:** Implement Best Start, Best Life workforce strategy to build workforce supply and support retention of early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality early childhood education.



## Our people

Description	Supporting a strong culture of integrity, inclusion and high performance
Strategic Plan Initiatives	<b>1.1 Victorian Secretaries Board (VSB) Integrity Statement Action Plan:</b> Support a strong culture of integrity by implementing the 2023 VSB Integrity Statement Action Plan through the delivery of work planned as part of the department's integrity program and the department's Integrity Statement Action Plan.
	<b>1.2 Develop a new workforce diversity and inclusion strategy:</b> Consolidate the range of existing strategies and plans into one, to focus effort and streamline actions for greater impact.
	<b>1.3 VSB 2025 Capability Development Statement:</b> Support a learning culture aimed at building capability in priority areas aligned to the department's Strategic Plan and the Public Sector Values. We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ promote and support alignment of craft capabilities (working in government, leadership and management, integrity, and the public sector values)</li> <li>→ implement the mandatory minimum training requirements for executives across the craft capabilities.</li> </ul>



## Strong systems

Description	Ensuring we have the right systems and business processes in place
Strategic Plan Initiatives	<b>2.1 Cyber security and Information and Communications Technology (Securing Connected Learners):</b> Create a safe and secure system-wide digital learning environment for students and schools to achieve a globally engaged and competitive education system.
	<b>2.2 Child Link and Kindergarten information systems:</b> Continue operation and workforce support for Child Link, which integrates key information to support individual children's wellbeing and safety (birth to 18 years). Establish a new kindergarten information system (Arrival) for monitoring kindergarten funding and data collection of enrolment and attendance information.
	<b>2.3 Improve information access and records management practices:</b> Implement a strategic Records Management Program consistent with the Records Management Strategy 2024–2028 to improve access to departmental information, support staff to systematically keep high-quality, digital-first records and ensure historic records are safeguarded and preserved.
	<b>2.4 Review of the VCAA:</b> Receive the final report of the independent review of the VCAA led by Dr Yehudi Blacher PSM, which commenced in December 2024 along with the Independent Monitor function. Implement the recommendations of both the review and the Independent Monitor to ensure that the VCAA can deliver its statutory functions and has the confidence of Victorian students, families and schools.
	<b>2.5 Strengthen early childhood regulatory approaches and processes:</b> Strengthen risk-based early childhood regulatory approaches (including in relation to providers and individuals) and improve key processes such as assessment and ratings. Improve policies and practices relating to early childhood learning settings to maximise child safety, and implement stronger processes to monitor and enforce behaviour of providers and individuals.



## Stewardship

Description	Actively ensuring our sectors deliver outcomes, through our state-owned schools and services and by providing support, guidance, oversight and assurance across education and early childhood sectors
Strategic Plan Initiatives	<p><b>3.1 Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA):</b> Finalise negotiations with the Australian Government for a Victorian Bilateral Agreement to the BFSA; and collaborate with other Australian governments to deliver agreed national commitments in schooling.</p> <p><b>3.2 Preschool Reform Agreement:</b> Finalise negotiations with the Australian Government for a new Preschool Reform Agreement.</p>
Key Activities	<p><b>3.3</b> Support Best Start, Best Life provision, planning and change management at the sector and local level.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Strengthen child information sharing and improve service connections in the early years, working with other departments, local governments and partners.</p> <p><b>3.5</b> Deliver agreed National Enabling Initiatives and National Reform Directions under the BFSA to support improvement in Australian schooling outcomes.</p>



## Partnerships and engagement

Description	Building strong and effective partnerships across and with our sectors, families and carers
Key Activities	<p><b>4.1</b> Continue working closely with local and federal governments on maximising our collaborative impact.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Continue working closely with the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions to improve access to VET Delivered to School Students, for students to participate in quality work-based learning activities with industry. Continue to improve senior secondary certificate implementation including through non-school providers, as part of the Senior Secondary Pathways Reform.</p>





## Physical infrastructure

### Description

Building and partnering to create and maintain contemporary, safe, and sustainable spaces

### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 5.1 Department of Education Asset Strategy:** Develop and maintain a high-performing asset base by targeting investment and improving processes so assets meet demand, are safe and in good condition, are fit-for-purpose and inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and asset managers are accountable and capable across the early childhood and school systems.
- 5.2 School infrastructure program:** Deliver infrastructure to meet demand including new school construction and associated establishment processes, land acquisition, additional permanent, refurbished and upgraded infrastructure at existing schools and modular classrooms, including building 100 schools between 2019 and 2026.
- 5.3 Early childhood infrastructure:** Grants and direct delivery to support expansion of places through kindergarten and early learning building projects that support the rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep. Building Blocks is also making early learning and kinder buildings, playgrounds and equipment more inclusive for children of all abilities.

### Key Activities

- 5.4** Update Kindergarten Infrastructure and Service Plans with all local governments.
- 5.5** Partner with local government, non-government schools and not-for-profit providers to deliver new early childhood infrastructure and identify non-government school sites for delivery of kindergartens.
- 5.6** Undertake analysis to determine where and when new schools should be built, and additional capacity required at established schools.



## Resilience, mitigation and adaptation to climate change

### Description

Doing our bit to address climate change and ensuring continuity of learning in the event of natural disasters and emergency events

### Strategic Plan Initiatives

- 6.1 Education and training climate change adaptation action plan 2022–26:** Build understanding of, and guide how to adapt and build resilience to, the impacts of climate change.
- 6.2 Greener Government Schools Buildings:** Install solar power systems in schools to lower the cost of electricity and reduce schools' carbon footprint.

## Section 8

# How we measure our success

The department uses a set of objective indicators and performance measures to evaluate outcomes and assess how well we are meeting our objectives and delivering our outputs.

Through monitoring and measuring our performance, we are better able to understand and demonstrate the impact we are having on educational outcomes in the Victorian community. The full set of the department's objective indicators and performance measures is published in the *2025–26 Victorian Budget – 2025–26 Department Performance Statement*<sup>4</sup>.

The department reports progress against its objective indicators and performance measures in the *Annual Report*<sup>5</sup>. The *Annual Report* also provides a summary of the progress in implementing the initiatives outlined in this Strategic Plan.

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4 (2025) 2025–26 Victorian Budget, [2025–26 Department Performance Statement](#)

5 [Department of Education annual reports](#)





Photo: Olympic Village Primary School, Heidelberg



## Appendix

# Financial and asset outlook

## Output costs

The 2025–26 Department Performance Statement<sup>6</sup> sets out the department's outputs and funding. For the 2025–26 financial year, the department's output budget totals \$17.8 billion.

The department's objectives and outputs	2025–26 (\$m)
<b>Raise development outcomes of 3- and 4-year old children prior to attending school</b>	
Kindergarten delivery	1,259.4
Early childhood sector supports and regulation	772.8
<b>Raise learning, development, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for all Victorian students</b>	
School education – primary	5,439.6
School education – secondary	4,703.2
Wellbeing support for students	426.4
Supports for schools and staff	1,907.9
<b>Provide equitable and inclusive schooling to all Victorian students</b>	
Promoting equal access to education	1,157.4
Additional supports for students with disabilities	2,177.4
<b>Total<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>17,844.1</b>

<sup>6</sup> DTF (2025) 2025–26 Victorian Budget, [2025–26 Department Performance Statement](#)

<sup>7</sup> Table may not add due to rounding.

## Operating performance

The department is expected to report an operating surplus of \$378 million in 2025–26, compared with an expected operating surplus of \$449 million in 2024–25 for the revised budget.

## Balance sheet

The department's net assets position is estimated to increase by \$2.3 billion in 2025–26, compared with the 2024–25 revised budget, mainly reflecting an increase in total assets of \$2.4 billion.

## Investing and finance

The department is anticipating an increase of \$2 million in its net cash position in 2025–26, compared with the 2024–25 revised budget increase of \$86 million.

## Asset outlook and investment

The department manages a significant and growing asset portfolio to deliver effective education services for Victorians. The asset portfolio includes schools' property, plant and equipment. The department's total assets are estimated to increase to \$51 billion by 30 June 2026. More than \$2.7 billion has been committed in 2025–26 for new and existing capital projects and \$2.9 billion remaining expenditure has been committed for future capital works. Further financial detail on the department's asset program is available in the 2025–26 Victorian Budget Paper 4: State Capital Program<sup>8</sup>.

## Approved use of State Administration Unit surplus

The Resource Management Framework<sup>9</sup> (section 3.5.2) sets out the order of funding for approved asset investments.

The department follows this order and if required, funds will be drawn down from accumulated State Administration Unit funding, after seeking approval from the Treasurer, as required under Section 33 of the *Financial Management Act 1994*.

Details of any access to surplus under Section 33 can be found in the department's Annual Report<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> DTF (2025) [2025–26 Victorian Budget, Budget Paper 4: State Capital Program](#)

<sup>9</sup> DTF (2025) [Resource Management Framework](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Department of Education annual reports](#)







# The Education State