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FROM THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tuesday May 3, 2005

\$299 MILLION TO CONTINUE EDUCATION REFORM

The Bracks Government has announced an extra **\$299 million** over four years to maintain small class sizes, cater for more students staying at school and continue improvements to literacy and numeracy.

The Minister for Education and Training, Lynne Kosky, said education remained the number one priority of the Bracks Government.

“We came to office in 1999 and were re-elected in 2002 to rebuild our education system,” Ms Kosky said.

“This Budget will continue our focus on low Prep to Grade 2 class sizes, the education basics of literacy and numeracy, and ensuring every student can learn to their full potential.”

Ms Kosky said recurrent funding, employing the equivalent of up to 300 new teachers, would target students most in need and cater for growth.

The Bracks Government has also invested additional funding to continue employing the equivalent of 560 teachers to keep primary class sizes at record lows, continue a focus on literacy and numeracy and ensure students stay in education and training for longer.

Additional funding of **\$112 million** will help students most at need to overcome disadvantage, target early years literacy and numeracy skills, invest in teacher professional development and help ensure 15-19 year olds are involved in education, training or employment.

Ms Kosky said \$42.9 million of that funding would continue early years numeracy programs, to ensure a continuing focus on education basics.

“We want to ensure all students get the best start in life, through smaller class sizes and specialist programs in the early years.”

She said an extra \$36.9 million would be allocated to schools to help needy students in the middle years.

“Extra money, better targeted through the new Student Resource Package introduced this year, means more teachers spending more time helping more students,” Ms Kosky said.

“An additional \$3 million is being allocated for teacher professional development to implement Victoria’s new essential learning standards.

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“We are also allocating \$29.1 million to Local Learning Employment Networks and other programs to encourage young people who have left school to stay in the education and training system or get a job. The longer children spend at school, the better their long term chances of success.”

Ms Kosky said a further **\$173 million** over four years had been allocated to reflect an increased number of students in the Victorian schools system and to keep Prep to Grade 2 class sizes low.

Ms Kosky said \$79.6 million would cater to enrolment growth in Government and non-government schools.

“Bracks Government initiatives to encourage students to stay at school are working, with Year 10 to Year 12 retention rates in Victorian Government schools increasing from 78.7 per cent in 1999 to 83 per cent,” she said.

“It is vital that schools have the ability to employ specialist teachers to cater for increased enrolments.”

An additional \$93.4 million over four years will ensure class sizes in the vital Prep to Grade 2 years remain small. Average primary school classes are at a 30 year low.

Ms Kosky said **\$14.2 million** would continue for another two years a program to improve students’ participation and achievement in Years 5 to 9.

“The Government wants to see as many students as possible complete 13 years of education or training. These programs will ensure students in the middle years of schooling remain engaged, challenged and at school,” Ms Kosky said.

Ms Kosky said the Bracks Government had made significant progress towards achieving its education targets.

“More students are moving through to the senior years of school, class sizes in the early years are at record lows and new programs are engaging and motivating students,” she said.

“The Bracks Government will keep rebuilding the education system, while ensuring a strong balanced Budget.”