



State Budget 2006

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FROM THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION SERVICES

Tuesday May 30, 2006

\$182 MILLION TO GIVE STUDENTS THE BEST START AT SCHOOL

The Bracks Government will ease pressure on family budgets by helping parents meet the costs of students starting primary and secondary school.

The Minister for Education Services, Jacinta Allan, said a five-year, **\$182 million** *School Start Bonus* was one of the centrepieces of the 2006-07 State Budget.

It guarantees the parents of every child starting Prep or Year 7 a one-off payment of \$300 to help them meet the costs of starting school.

“The Bracks Government is committed to doing what’s best for Victorian families and making this State an even better place to live, work and raise a family,” Ms Allan said.

“The new bonus provides direct assistance to the families of approximately 63,000 students who start Prep each year and about 66,000 Year 7 students who have made the annual transition to secondary school.

“Parents have often told me of the additional financial stress placed on families when a child begins their primary or secondary schooling.

“The expense of buying start-up items such as school and sporting uniforms, school bags and other related equipment can impose significant financial strain on households on top of the usual cost of raising a family.

“Making matters worse, these one-off costs come just after Christmas time each year, when some families are already financially stretched.

“This payment will help ensure children can begin their school lives from day one fully equipped with everything they need to get the best possible start to school. This is good news for parents and their children.”

A half payment will be made at the beginning of term three this year to families of students currently in Prep and Year 7. Full payment will begin at the start of the 2007 school year.

The *School Start Bonus* is in addition to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which is provided to over 200,000 children from low-income families to help with education-related costs. The EMA is paid in two instalments (March and September each year).

Current EMA payments were last year increased by 60 percent and are now \$205 for primary school students and \$410 for secondary school students.