

Dear Parent / Guardian

Financial assistance for your child's education

Education is the Victorian Government's number one priority and we believe every child deserves every opportunity to succeed at school.

Our Government continues to invest in more teachers, better school buildings and making education more affordable through initiatives like the *School Start Bonus* and the Education Maintenance Allowance to ensure children have the best possible opportunities for their education.

The Education Maintenance Allowance helps cover the cost of essential educational items like textbooks, stationery, uniforms and excursions for your child.

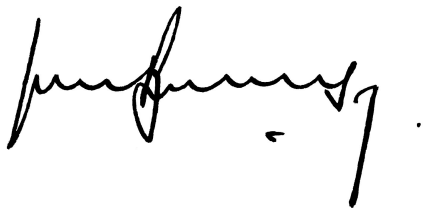
In 2010 the annual Education Maintenance Allowance payment is \$225 for primary school students and \$450 for secondary students from eligible families. This amount is split evenly between the parents/guardians and the school to support your child's education.

You can receive the parent/guardian portion of the Education Maintenance Allowance by direct bank deposit into your nominated bank account or by cheque.

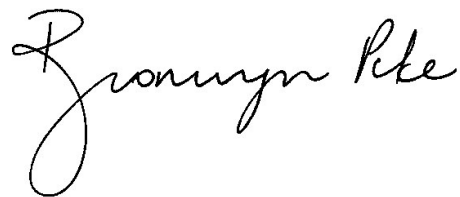
If your child is starting Prep or Year 7, you will also receive the \$300 Victorian Government *School Start Bonus* to help with the extra costs associated with starting primary or secondary education.

We wish your child every success for the new school year.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Brumby".

John Brumby MP
Premier of Victoria

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bronwyn Pike".

Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Education



EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) provides assistance to eligible families by helping with the costs associated with the education of their children.

In 2010 the EMA payment for parents/guardians is **\$225 for primary school students** and **\$450 for secondary students**. This amount is split evenly between the parents/guardians and the school and is paid in two instalments as per the schedule of payments set out in the table below.

Schedule of payments in 2010			
Instalment	Portion payable to	Primary school rate*	Secondary school rate*
One (70% of EMA)	Parent	\$ 78.75	\$ 157.50
	School	\$ 78.75	\$ 157.50
Two (30% of EMA)	Parent	\$ 33.75	\$ 67.50
	School	\$ 33.75	\$ 67.50
Total for 2010		\$ 225.00	\$ 450.00

*Student year level (or age for ungraded and special school students) forms the basis for calculating the amount payable. Students turning sixteen during the year will be paid on a pro rata basis up to and including the month they reach the age of sixteen.

The first instalment will comprise 70 per cent of the EMA and will be paid from March 2010. The second instalment will comprise the remaining 30 per cent and will be paid from August 2010. This payment schedule recognises that families incur the highest educational costs at the start of the school year.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive the EMA, you must:

- be either a parent or guardian of a primary or secondary school student up to the age of sixteen; **and**
- be an eligible beneficiary of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004 or be a Veterans Affairs (TPI) pensioner or be a foster parent; and
- submit your application to the school by the due date.

The eligibility criteria must be met as at the first day of 1st Term (**27 January 2010** which is the first day for teaching staff) for the first instalment and the first day of 3rd Term (**12 July 2010**) for the second instalment. Any applications based on Centrelink payments that are not income tested (e.g. Carer Allowance, formerly Child Disability Allowance, Mobility Allowance and Remote Area Allowance) are not eligible unless the claimant, in their own name, complies with the second dot point above.

The EMA is payable up until the age of 16 years. Once a student turns 16, they should apply for Youth Allowance through Centrelink. For further information visit www.centrelink.gov.au

Application forms

Application forms are available from your child's school. A separate application is required for each school if you have children attending different schools.

Please submit your application to your child's school by **26 February 2010** for the first instalment of the EMA and by **6 August 2010** for the second instalment of the EMA unless your child remains enrolled at the same school and you were paid the first EMA instalment.

Payment methods

Direct Bank Deposit (EFT) payment option: EFT payments can only be made to the parent's nominated bank account for parent's choosing the EFT payment option. Please advise your child's school if your nominated bank account changes during the year.

Cheque payment option: Cheques payable to parents will be sent to the school for distribution for parent's choosing the cheque payment option. Please advise your child's school if your address changes during the year.

School portion of the Education Maintenance Allowance

Schools must spend the school's portion of the EMA on essential educational items for which all parents are normally expected to provide. Such items could include:

- *student text books*
- *student stationery (e.g. pens, pencils, exercise books, work-books)*
- *materials for electives where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics etc) or the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services and the higher cost alternatives*
- *programs provided by outside specialists (e.g. visiting artists, speakers, performers)*
- *camps and excursions which are integral to the curriculum and which all students are expected to attend*
- *school identification cards*
- *school uniform*
- *official diary/handbook/work planner*
- *student computer printing beyond the needs of the eight Key Learning Areas (e.g. personal use).*

The school's portion of the EMA cannot be used to offset voluntary contributions. Common examples of materials or services which are supported through voluntary contributions are:

- *equipment purchases*
- *buildings and grounds beautification*
- *library fund*
- *general contribution to the school.*

Schools need to inform parents on request of the cost of the items on which they propose to spend the school's portion of the EMA.

Schools are only custodians of the school portion of the EMA. If a student transfers to another school, the balance of the school's portion must accompany the student to the new school.

Any portion of the EMA which is not expended by the end of the year must be returned to the parent/guardian. However, with *agreement of the parent/guardian*, this money can be carried over into the next year or other appropriate arrangements made to suit the needs of the student.

Questions

All queries relating to eligibility and payments of the EMA should be directed to your child's school.