FROM THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
AND THE MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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BIGGEST SCHOOLS BOOST IN VICTORIA’S HISTORY

The Brumby Labor Government is taking action in schools and kindergartens to deliver jobs and support Victorian families in tough global economic times and for the future with a $1.7 billion boost to the State’s education system.

Together with the Rudd Federal Government, the Brumby Labor Government is delivering the biggest investment in Victorian schools in the State’s history – at more than $2.5 billion.

The Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, said the 2009 State Budget showed the Brumby Labor Government was providing strong leadership in tough global economic times to see Victoria through and build the very best education and early childhood system for the future.

“Education is the Brumby Labor Government’s number one priority and we are taking action on education to support Victorian families in tough global economic times and for the future, with this budget alone securing up to 35,000 Victorian jobs,” Ms Pike said.

“The Brumby Labor Government is delivering record funding to schools to give every Victorian child the opportunity to have the best start in life. By delivering to the education system new school buildings, the latest technology and more support for teachers, we are providing 21st century students with a modern education and the skills to get the jobs of the future.”

Highlights of this year’s investment in education include:

- $402 million in Brumby Labor Government funding to rebuild, renovate or extend schools across the State, securing 690 jobs in construction. Combined with the Rudd Federal Government’s investment in schools, 5000 jobs in construction will be secured;
- $13.6 million for additional staff to respond to growth in demand for kindergarten places;
- $57.7 million for the continued employment of 200 teaching and learning coaches to build capacity of teachers, and 50 Ultranet workers to help teachers get the most out of 21st century technology;
- $1.17 billion to lift teacher quality through higher pay and more support in the classroom, including more planning time and increased tuition time for secondary school students – for the more than 40,000 teachers employed by the Brumby Labor Government in the state school system;
- $15.2 million to meet increased demand for the VET in Schools program to build skills and create jobs;
- $7 million to invest in more computers in schools to give students the skills they need in the 21st century world;
- $2.5 million for the Community Engagement Project, which will build awareness about 21st century teaching and learning practices; and
- $38 million for a range of education reforms to support the achievement of Council of Australian Government targets in key areas such as literacy and numeracy, teacher quality and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.
This new funding complements the initiatives previously announced through the 2008-09 Budget Update, which included:

- $53.5 million for capital grants to needy non-government schools for planning and upgrading or replacing of education facilities; and
- $11.6 million to support operating costs associated with computers provided through the National Secondary School Computer Fund.

“We are undertaking the biggest school building program in the State’s history, which is providing Victorian families with great schools for their children and creating jobs in the construction industry in tough economic times,” Ms Pike said.

“We are supporting teachers in the classroom with maths, science and Ultranet coaches in targeted schools and professional teacher support and development to deliver better results for students.”

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Maxine Morand, said the Brumby Labor Government’s focus on investment in the early years in 2009 State Budget would provide the vital building blocks children needed to get the best possible start.

“We know the early years of life have a profound impact on a child’s future,” Ms Morand said.

“The 2009 State Budget ensures that every child has an opportunity to go to kindergarten in the year before school and further improves the system that supports children with a disability.”

Ms Morand said the Brumby Labor Government would invest a further $13.6 million to ensure all Victorian children would now have a funded place at kindergarten in the year before school.

This investment will deliver an additional 4000 places at kindergartens across Victoria and maintain free places for eligible low-income families.

“Participating in a structured kindergarten program is a vital part of children’s development, setting them up for the successful transition to school,” Ms Morand said.

The 2009 State Budget also provides an extra $9 million for reforming early intervention and ongoing support services for children and young people with disabilities or developmental delay.

Ms Pike said Victorians also would gain vital funding for schools and early childhood services through a range of national education and early childhood partnership agreements with the Rudd Federal Government. These include:

- $496.5 million over five years for the National Secondary School Computer Fund to provide computers for secondary schools with students in Years 9 to 12, as part of the Digital Education Revolution;
- $275.3 million over seven years through the National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities to drive improvements for education in low socio-economic status (SES) school communities and improve student outcomes;
- $26.8 million over two years through the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy;
- $24 million over four years through the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality to improve teacher and school leader quality;
- $210.6 million over five years through the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education to support the delivery of universal access to 15 hours per week of early childhood education for all children in the year before school, by 2013; and
- $22 million over six years for the National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development to improve the outcomes for Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience.