THE BEST SCHOOLS FOR KIDS BORN IN THE RECENT BABY BOOM

Victorian families with children born in the recent baby boom are among the big winners in the 2010 State Budget as the Brumby Labor Government not only meets, but surpasses, its promise to rebuild, renovate or extend 500 government schools by 2011.

The Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, said this year's budget delivered a $469.5 million boost for education and early childhood development to make sure every Victorian child had the best start in life.

“The Brumby Labor Government is investing in vital services to support Victorian families now and to build a prosperous future,” Ms Pike said.

“We understand Victorian parents want the best for their children. That's why we are funding the rebuilding, renovating or extending of every government school in every community across the whole State.

“Together with the Commonwealth, the Brumby Labor Government is helping to give Victorian students the best possible start in life by building world-class classrooms, libraries, laboratories, gyms and other learning environments.

“Like all Victorian parents, we want Victorian students to learn in the best possible classrooms and to learn from the best possible teachers – that's why education is the Brumby Labor Government's number-one priority.”

Ms Pike said $271.3 million invested in the 2010 State Budget would see the Brumby Labor Government exceed by 53 schools its promise to rebuild, renovate or extend 500 government schools by 2011.

“Victorian families want the best quality schools close to home, that's why the Brumby Labor Government is delivering on the final tranche of our $1.9 billion Victorian Schools Plan,” she said.

“We are making sure our schools are ready to provide 21st century students with a modern education. Since 2007, we have funded 553 school building projects as part of the $1.9 billion Victorian Schools Plan – 53 more than promised.

“Last year, the Brumby Labor Government brought forward our school building investment as part of our economic strategy to secure jobs during the global financial crisis.

“This year – as Victoria leads a global economic recovery – the Brumby Labor Government is not only delivering Victorian families what we promised on school buildings, we are going above and beyond.

“As part of this investment, our Government has committed $41 million for capital works to upgrade the bushfire resistance of facilities for schools in higher risk areas.

Media contact: Glen Atwell  9651 5799/0457 307 010
“Schools will be upgraded to comply with new bushfire prevention standards. The program includes retrofitting schools with fire doors and shutters, and water deluge and fire sprinkler systems.”

Ms Pike said this 2010 State Budget investment in school buildings came on top of the $104.1 million from the Brumby Labor Government announced in December – funding brought forward to complement Commonwealth Building the Education Revolution projects.

Ms Pike said $7 million allocated in this State Budget would see the Brumby Labor Government fulfil its $28 million promise made to invest in more computers in schools to give students the skills they will need in a 21st century world.

As part of its Closing the Gap strategy to improve outcomes for Indigenous Victorians, the Brumby Labor Government is contributing $1.7 million towards the development of eight new academies for Indigenous students.

The $4.2 million initiative, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government and philanthropic organisations, will establish five football academies and three dance academies for Indigenous students at government schools in Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill, Bairnsdale, Warmambool, Ballarat, Eaglehawk and Mooroopna.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, Maxine Morand, said the 2010 State Budget delivered an $82.6 million comprehensive package to meet the growing demand for early childhood services across Victoria.

“Our Government understands that Victorian parents want the best possible start in life for their children, that’s why we are delivering more kinder places, increasing the skills of our early childhood workforce and building new and expanded facilities,” Ms Morand said.

The Brumby Labor Government’s 2010 State Budget includes:
- $63.1 million over five years for an additional 3590 kindergarten places;
- $14 million for building and expanding kindergartens and children’s centres;
- $3.5 million over three years for early childhood workforce initiatives; and
- $2 million over four years for the Maternal and Child Health Line and Parent Line.

“This package will ensure a place is funded for every child enrolled in kinder in the year before school,” she said.

Along with the boost to kindergarten places, the Brumby Labor Government has committed $14 million to extend its successful four-year $38 million Children’s Capital program.

The Children’s Capital Program provides grants to support the construction of integrated children’s centres, which provide a one-stop-shop for parents to access children’s services including childcare, kinder, maternal and child health and early intervention services. The program also includes renovating and upgrading existing community based early years facilities.

The Brumby Labor Government’s support of the early childhood workforce has also been strengthened with funding of $3.5 million over three years to support mentoring, leadership courses and professional development for early childhood professionals.

This funding complements significant recent workforce reforms including new workplace agreements which give Victoria’s graduate early childhood teachers salary parity with graduate primary and secondary school teachers.

In another baby boom boost, the Brumby Labor Government has also increased funding to the Maternal and Child Health Line and the Parent Line by $2 million.
Ms Morand and Ms Pike said a massive $108.6 million package would provide children and young people with a disability every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

“Parents of children with disabilities told us they wanted improved support and access to early intervention services and the Brumby Labor Government has listened and taken action,” Ms Morand said.

This package to support children with disabilities includes:
- $38.4 million over four years to increase funding for Early Childhood Intervention Services, which supports families of children with a disability or a developmental delay before they reach school age, through services such as speech therapy and physiotherapy;
- $38.1 million over two years to meet increasing demand for the Program for Students with Disabilities, particularly in the areas of autism and intellectual disability. This program provides funding for schools to meet students’ individual learning needs, such as teacher support and allied health support like physiotherapy and speech therapy;
- $18.5 million in additional funding over three years to provide transport for more than 1 700 students attending special schools;
- $9.2 million over four years for a new Victorian Deaf Education Institute in Melbourne to support and train teachers working with deaf students in schools across the state; and
- $4.4 million to establish, in partnership with specialist schools, “satellite” classrooms at local primary and secondary schools.

“The increase in funding for Early Childhood Intervention Services represents the single biggest increase in investment in these services since 2003. These services include physiotherapy, speech therapy and special education,” Ms Morand said.