



## MEDIA RELEASE

January 25, 2006

### **KINDERGARTEN DECLARED “ESSENTIAL”** **Survey of Victorian Kindergarten Parents Finds Satisfaction and Suggestions**

A survey of Victoria's kindergarten parents has found strong support for the system with 97% of parents believing it was “essential” preparation for schooling though there is concern over costs, professional qualifications, access for low-income families and a desire for longer and more flexible operating hours.

Commissioned by Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV) the survey of 1523 parents from 154 kindergartens and 23 child care centers found:

- 88% believe parents should be provided with written reports on their child's progress;
- 84% believe that government should fully fund kindergarten for both four year old and three year old children;
- 73% want the individual in charge of their kindergarten to have a four year tertiary degree in early childhood teaching;

In addition, over one third of parents believed fees were too high (the annual average metropolitan fees are \$727, having risen 7.25 times faster than CPI since the introduction of the current per capita funding system in 1994).

“Parents are unequivocal,” says Gerard Mansour, CEO of KPV. “They want services to expand, be well resourced, flexible and professionally accredited. Parents want access to kindergarten for all families to prepare children for life, regardless of their finances. They also want operating hours that are as flexible as their working hours. The real challenge for government and kindergartens is to provide flexible options for families – this will require planning, resources and funding. The good news for parents is that the rebuilding has begun. The challenge for government is for the rebuilding to continue.”

KPV has used the survey as the basis for its Budget Priorities Submission 2006 – 2007 that among other things calls for:

- phasing in of fee relief of kindergarten fees for both three and four year old kindergarten for families holding a Health Care Card at a cost of \$11.15 million;
- an accreditation system for all kindergartens at a cost of \$1.9 million;
- expansion of the range of flexible early childhood programs and operating hours at a cost of \$300,000;
- investment in capital works to enable existing facilities expand operating hours at a cost of \$10 million.

**MEDIA:** Full survey results, interviews with Gerard Mansour and kindergarten parents available through media advisor Brett de Hoedt of Hootville Communications. 9510 0848 / 0414 713 802. The Budget Priorities Submission 2006 – 2007 is available on the KPV website: <http://www.kpv.org.au/pdfs/BudSub0607web.pdf>