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## **Importance of early childhood education reinforced in State Budget**

Parents know it and research evidence increasingly tells us—quality early childhood education and care is crucial to ensuring strong outcomes for our children, our community and our economy, says Meredith Carter, CEO of Kindergarten Parents Victoria the peak body for Victoria’s kindergartens today.

Responding to the State Budget Ms Carter said, “KPV is very pleased to see the Government delivering on its early childhood election commitments and going even further, particularly for vulnerable children. KPV believes quality preschool is a public good but vulnerable children are the ones who will benefit most.”

That is why we particularly welcome:

- \$28.9m over 4 years to double the fee subsidy for health care card holders to basically make kindergarten free for this group. This is a concrete measure which will help ensure some 17,000 children attend kindergarten
- 2.7m to give indigenous children of health care card holders access to three-year-old kindergarten
- \$4.1m for koori preschool assistants
- \$6.2m commitment to increase support for cluster managers and fund KPV to establish pilot projects creating early learning networks with local government.

Ms Carter said, “The increased fee subsidy will also help improve cash flow for many kindergartens. We anticipate there may be some challenges in the implementation phase but KPV will work with our members to help ensure their smooth introduction.”

Ultimately, KPV would like to see two years of kindergarten fully funded for all children.

KPV also notes that it will be important that the development and implementation of the new initiatives for indigenous children is culturally sensitive to ensure that they do reap the benefits.

Ms Carter said “We are also keen to get started on the development of our pilot projects because today’s budget announcements reinforce the need for much greater collaboration between kindergartens and other community-based children’s services as well as more flexible use of kindergarten infrastructure.”

“This is what the KPV pilot projects will aim to achieve,” she said.

“KPV and parents around Victoria will be watching closely over future budgets to ensure today’s budget commitments are maintained and enhanced. This also includes a commitment to enshrine in legislation the right of all children to kindergarten and a timeframe for this to happen.” Ms Carter said.

“The kindergarten funding decisions made in the 2007-08 State Government budget will have a direct impact on the more than 200,000 children, their parents, teachers and local communities, who all play a substantial role in sustaining Victoria’s community-managed kindergarten programs.”

To view KPV's Budget Priorities Submission go to [www.kpv.org.au](http://www.kpv.org.au)

## About KPV

KPV is the leading peak organisation that develops promotes and sustains quality early childhood education. KPV has extensive membership from the broader children’s services industry, including kindergartens, childcare centres, local government, cluster managers and other affiliated organisations. Through its membership base, KPV represents over 60,000 families statewide.

## Media

**Meredith Carter, CEO of Kindergarten Parents Victoria is available for interview on 0400 511 763**