

MEDIA RELEASE

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Extra year of education an important equity measure

Public school parents have welcomed the major reform of early childhood education, announced today in the 2022-23 NSW Budget.

The Budget's signature education announcement is a \$5.8 billion investment over 10 years to introduce universal pre-Kindergarten education for four-year-olds by 2030.

P&C Federation President Natalie Walker, a former early childhood teacher, said providing families with greater access to early childhood education in the year before children started school was important for their development and a vital support for families.

"An extra year of pre-Kindergarten education will ideally result in smoother transitions for children starting school and more holistic connections of our services in public school communities across the State," Mrs Walker said.

"It's an important equity measure because we know that some of our financially disadvantaged families often can't afford or can't access quality early childhood education.

"We are excited to see what facilities will be built within our government schools to support early childhood learning."

The P&C Federation also welcomed the 'back to school' \$150 subsidy for primary and high school students to help pay for school supplies, such as uniforms, shoes, textbooks and stationery, for Term 1, 2023. The subsidy will be available from Service NSW from early next year.

"With more than two years of living through a pandemic, bushfires and floods, the subsidy will help ease cost of living pressures for our families," Mrs Walker said.

The Budget allocated \$1.6 billion for 23 new and upgraded public schools and \$1.2 billion for school maintenance. Mrs Walker said it was a positive step to see capital works and maintenance funding maintained to plan for the projected enrolment boom of 180,000 additional students in NSW public schools by 2039.

"We will seek advice, however, to evaluate if this funding addresses the serious concerns raised last year by the NSW Auditor-General about the Department of Education's long-term planning to meet the projected enrolment growth," she said.

The Budget measures link the transition stages of education from early childhood through school education and to TAFE. The P&C Federation also welcomed increased recurrent and capital spending in TAFE, including fee-free apprenticeships, and the expansion of Careers NSW to provide free career guidance to people of all ages.

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