



# Right From the Start

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter)



## What is Early Childhood Intervention?

Early Childhood Intervention encompasses a range of services for very young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families.

These services aim to enhance the child's personal development, strengthen the family's own competencies and support the social inclusion of the child.

In Victoria, Early Childhood Intervention services are funded primarily through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The services are provided by specialist agencies who employ Early Childhood Intervention professionals to provide special education, therapy, service planning and coordination.

Early Childhood Intervention services are tailored to meet the individual needs of the child and are focused on supporting the child in their own environment with everyday experiences and activities.

## What funding is provided for Early Childhood Intervention?

The Victorian Government currently provides funding of \$5,418 per child/family per annum. Unfortunately, in many cases, there is still a big gap between what is available and what is needed to properly support a child and family.

Additional investment is urgently required to address the current limitations of the Early Childhood Intervention service system so that all Victorian children can realise their potential.

## What does ECIA (VC) want the Government to do?

ECIA (VC) is seeking three commitments from the Victorian Government:

- **Our children can't wait** - 500 additional Early Childhood Intervention places to be funded in 2010/11 to reduce waiting list time.
- **Families moving forward** - Specific funding for early childhood intervention professionals to provide families of children with developmental delays and disabilities intensive information and support "right from the start" to become assertive and confident in their parenting.
- **Universal education guarantee** - Additional funding for early childhood intervention professionals to provide professional support and mentoring to staff of universal services (\$19 million per annum) and an increase in the availability of additional staffing to enable children with developmental delays and disabilities to actively participate in high quality universal early childhood education and care.

ECIA (VC) is asking that children with developmental delays/disabilities and their families be given the chance to get a fair start in life. A detailed budget submission has been made to the Victorian Government.

## How many children receive Early Childhood Intervention services?

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development currently provides funding for 9,820 places in Early Childhood Intervention services within Victoria.

Additionally, in May 2009, there were 1,170 children waiting for Early Childhood Intervention services. However, a recent review of Early Childhood Intervention services in Victoria recognised that this data may not capture all children who need Early Childhood Intervention and that there is a growing population that needs to be addressed.

## Why is Early Childhood Intervention important?

Timely access to Early Childhood Intervention services can enhance child development, minimise potential delays, remediate existing problems and prevent further deterioration (Shonkoff & Meisels, 1990).

Access to support from Early Childhood Intervention professionals is also crucial for the wellbeing of families. Families need support to manage the care-giving and emotional demands of caring for a child with developmental delays and disabilities. Early Childhood Intervention professionals can help parents build positive relationships with their children and develop the skills to meet their child's developmental needs. They also provide emotional support, information and advice, assistance to identify and address needs, service co-ordination and advocacy.

Access to quality, inclusive early childhood education and care is another important factor in ensuring children with developmental delays and disabilities have a good start in life. With adequate support, community settings such as kindergarten and childcare can not only ensure children with developmental delays and disability have access to inclusive education and care, but can develop their programs to ensure all children are actively engaged and achieve educational outcomes. Staff in these services rely on visiting Early Childhood Intervention professionals to provide information about individual children and to provide professional support and mentoring.

**ECIA (VC) is calling on the Victorian Government to help all Victorian children realise their full potential.**

### Who can I contact for further information?

Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) is conducting the Right from the Start campaign and if you require any further information, our contact details are below:

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