



# Victorian Principals Association

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## VPA Position Paper

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### Education Maintenance Allowance

#### Purpose

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) calls on the State Government to reverse its decision to cease Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) funding.

#### Background to the VPA Position:

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- The EMA currently provides necessary and invaluable financial assistance to low-income families to help meet the costs associated with the education of their child/children, with payments addressing inequity and disparity.
- In 2013, over 70 per cent of families elected to have their EMA paid directly to their school to be used to fund a range of expenses for their child/children, showing that many families rely upon and require EMA assistance.
- The discontinuation of EMA will directly affect parents' capacity to fund their child's/children's education, with those most vulnerable in school communities to be particularly affected.
- Without EMA funding, low-income families will struggle to meet the costs associated with returning to or beginning school such as paying for uniforms, books and stationery items
- The cancellation of EMA will also reduce or prevent parents' capacity to afford valuable learning experiences such as camps, sporting activities, excursion and incursions. Many children will miss out on these experiences.
- The discontinuation of EMA will directly affect the provision of front line services by schools and will impact on schools' ability to direct their funds into educational programs.
- Families will expect the delivery of existing programs, which schools simply cannot administer without the funding provided by the EMA at their disposal.
- Redirecting the current EMA funding to meet the *Better Schools Plan* does not provide direct funding to disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Families will no longer be able to use the funding to meet the specific needs of their child/children.
- There is little knowledge about the cancellation of EMA in the wider community.

## **VPA Position:**

The VPA advocates for:

- Reinstatement of the Education Maintenance Allowance by the State Government or equivalent funding for the education of disadvantaged students.
- Creation of a system that ensures that EMA funds allocated to parents are directed towards the education of their child/children.
- In the meantime, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development media unit to assist with clear communication to the community of plans to cancel EMA and help schools address likely parent backlash.
- Immediate provision of explicit advice to schools detailing how the DEECD will:
  - transparently distribute funds previously used for EMA directly to schools.
  - provide direct support to disadvantaged and vulnerable families.
  - consult and engage with stakeholders to enact these changes.
- Provision of advice on the impact of *Better Schools* funding for disadvantage and vulnerable students and their families as the Government works towards full implementation of the *Better Schools Plan* by 2022.