

Media Release

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Minister for Families & Children

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NEW RESEARCH TRIAL UNDERWAY TO GET EVERY TODDLER TALKING

Researchers are looking at a ground-breaking way to help Victorian babies and toddlers fully develop their communication and language skills, setting them up for success in later life.

Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, today launched the Every Toddler Talking research trial at the Acacia Children's Centre in St Albans. Under the trial, early childhood educators will be equipped with new, evidence-based strategies for helping children under three build language and social skills, no matter their learning and communication styles and abilities.

Educators will work closely with specialist speech pathologists who will tailor support to respond to children's individual needs.

Phase one of the trial, which took place in 2015, examined the methods used in Victoria and across the world. The evidence showed that early childhood educators working with allied health professionals were uniquely positioned to support all children to be effective communicators.

The findings are now being tested in phase two of the project, which involves 21 early childhood education and care services and seven community health services across the state, including Mildura, Geelong, Sunbury, Brimbank, Dandenong, Alpine area and Mornington Peninsula.

The Victorian Government has invested \$1.2 million in the project over three years, and has partnered with leading early childhood researchers, including Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the University of Melbourne.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"Early language skills predict later achievement – so we're investing early to help every child achieve their best."

"Supporting every child to thrive in the early years is a key part of making Victoria the Education State."

Quote attributable to Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education at the University of Melbourne, Patricia Eadie

"Children develop important language skills from birth so how we communicate with children matters enormously and from very early on. There is a large body of evidence that tells us how important responsive interactions are between toddlers and adults for their language development as well as their social and emotional well-being."

EARLY LANGUAGE KEY FACTS AND STATS

- By 22 months, a child's language development can predict outcomes at age 26.
- By age two, 75% of a child's brain growth has occurred.
- By age three to six, a child's narrative skills are a powerful predictor of literacy levels at eight-12 years.
- By age four, the difference in the number of words children from disadvantaged backgrounds hear is 19 million.
- By age five, a child's vocabulary will predict their educational success and outcomes at age 30.