

# **Pre-Budget Submission for Specific Learning Disorders (SLD)/Dyslexia**

Priorities for the 14-15 Victorian State Budget  
from the SLD Community.

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Submission to the DEECD from:

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## Introduction

This Pre-Budget Priorities paper is a result of key Victorian Specific Learning Disorders/Dyslexia Interest Groups. It was developed to assist the DEECD in developing a feasible way forward of reaching their 10-year vision of making Victoria a world leader in learning and development with the first priority of improving the opportunities for all learners without exception.

Currently there are 880,000<sup>1</sup> students aged 5 to 18 in Victoria, 10% -- or 88,000<sup>2</sup> -- of which are estimated to have some form of a Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) such as dyslexia.

SLD, which is an umbrella term for a series of disorders, cause major obstacles to learning and therefore if undiagnosed, unaddressed and/or unsupported will prevent/inhibit full participation in the curriculum.

Students with SLD make up the greatest portion of students with disabilities in Victoria, but are currently offered the least amount of support. The majority of Victorian teachers, pre-service or in-service, have limited to nil training in SLD and therefore are unable to identify or provide appropriate remediation or support for these students.

Basically, Victorian teachers are not being trained to teach 10% of the students in their classrooms.

The result is these students simply do not have the same access to the learning environment as their peers therefore their learning outcomes are diminished.

Research reveals that unidentified/unaddressed SLD more often than not will lead to indicators that are directly contradictory to the DEECD's 2013-14 Outcome Indicators<sup>3</sup>. These include:

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<sup>1</sup> DEECD 2013-17 Strategic Plan

<sup>2</sup> Helping people with dyslexia: a national agenda: report to the Hon Bill Shorten Jan 2010.

<sup>3</sup> DEECD 2013-14 Strategic Plan

- Students inability to meet the expected standard in national and international literacy and numeracy assessments;
- Students inability to complete Year 12 or equivalent;
- Students having unacceptable levels of school attendance due to anxiety, stress and depression;
- Students not feeling connected to their school;
- Students having a negative opinion about their school -- feeling the school does not provide a safe or orderly learning environment.

**In order to meet the DEECD's 10-year goal of becoming a world leader in learning and development as well as achieve other defined Priorities the *educational outcomes of these 88,000 Victorian students must significantly improve.***

As system architects who can improve educational outcomes of students, **the DEECD has the ability to equally improve the outcomes of students with SLD by focusing on:**

- Working closely and openly with the key SLD/Dyslexia interest groups and experts in order to develop and implement appropriate support for these students;
- Empowering educators by improving their understanding of SLD and their knowledge of best-practice strategies that maximise support of these students within current DEECD school budgets;
- Improving educators' wellbeing via providing them with the tools that will allow them to teach all their students – including those 88,000 with SLD.

The Priorities within this Pre-Budget submission have been developed by key Victorian Specific Learning Disorders Interest Groups and SLD experts, with further details on the following pages.

It is important to note that the cost to implement the setout Priorities within this document is **\$45.45/student with SLD.**

**It is also important to note that the strategies and teaching methods part of the initiatives within these Priorities would not only benefit students with SLD but would benefit ALL students.**

## Summary

The recommended 2014/15 SLD priorities are as follows:

1. Establishment of a **Victorian State Specific Learning Disability Advisory Committee**;
2. Implementation of **Pre-Service Training** for Diploma of Education Students;
3. Implementation of an **In-Service Training Program** that compliments the DEECD's current dyslexia training strategy.

## **Priority 1: Establishment of a Victoria State Specific Learning Disorders Advisory Council (SLDAC)**

The first recommended Priority is to establish a Victoria State Specific Learning Disorders Advisory Council. The Council would significantly contribute in the DEECD's role of providing a Centre of Excellence in relationship to improving the performance of students with SLD.

The primary objective of the Council is to collaborate, share knowledge and provide expert advice and support in the development and implementation of strategies that would address the needs of students with SLD in Victorian State Primary and Secondary Schools. The SLDAC:

- Will consist of representatives from each key Victorian Specific Learning Disorders Interest Groups, SLD experts, and DEECD representatives;
- Has a multi-sector focus, encompassing the Primary and Secondary educational sectors across both metropolitan and regional areas of Victoria;
- Will be funded and managed by the DEECD;
- Will not have any executive function in its role;
- Members will be prepared to participate in an honorary capacity;
- May second or involve other persons to assist the Council as necessary;
- Meet on a Quarterly basis.

<b>Advisory Committee Estimated Cost:</b>	
# of meetings/year:	<b>4</b>
Venue/materials/catering costs:	<b>\$200/meeting</b>
<b>Total Estimated Cost:</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>

Please Note: Estimate based on meetings being held at the DEECD in Melbourne.

## Priority 2: Pre-Service Teacher Training

With the DEECDs first priority of *'Improving the opportunity for all learners without exception'*, which is also exemplified by DDA legislation, teacher preparation needs to reflect the requirement for equal access to learning in relationship to those students with SLD.

Therefore, the second SLD priority is to develop and implement a Course in SLD as an elective subject to 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year Diploma of Education students at key Victorian Universities that would address the specific needs of the SLD student population. Additionally, the development material would be made available to all universities who prepare teachers for the Australian education system.

The overall goal of the Course is to **increase educational and wellbeing outcomes for students with SLD through building new teachers' competency and willingness to provide an effective learning environment to these students.**

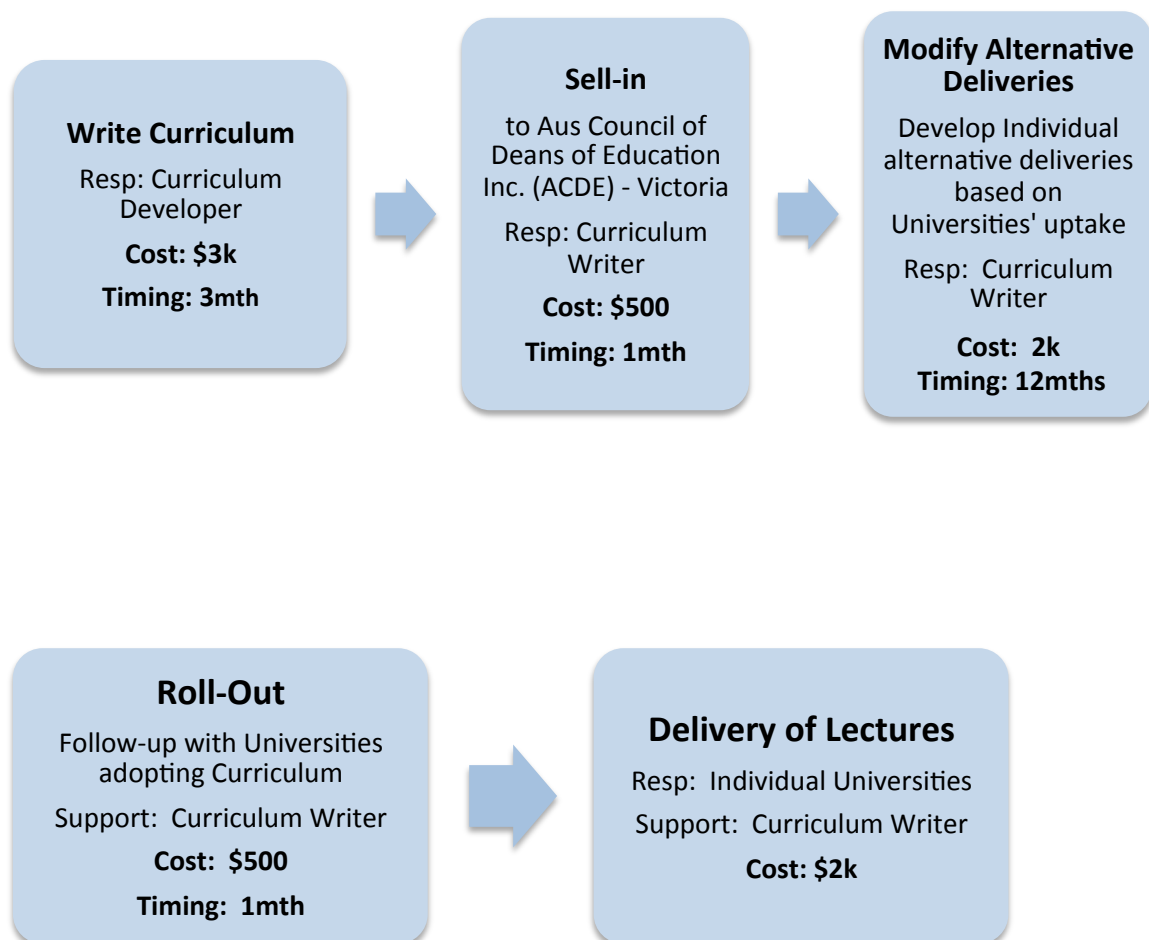
The Course would take an interdisciplinary approach to addressing the needs of these students within a range of educational contexts, with the Course outcomes providing new teachers with the ability to:

- Identify a student with SLD;
- Recognise the diverse needs of students with SLD;
- Competently implement suitable curriculum responses;
- Proficiently deliver appropriate pedagogy approaches;
- Realise the infusion of technologies that help to remediate, accommodate and support students with SLD and implement them within the learning environment.

The Course duration would be delivered over 36hrs over one 12-week semester, 3hrs/week (1hr lecture/2hrs tutorial/week).



Overview of milestones, timing and costs for Priority 2: Pre-Service Training



Total estimated cost: \$8k

Total estimated timing through to Roll-out: 17 months (1 year/5 months)

### Priority 3: In-Service Professional Training

The third recommended priority is to develop and implement In-Service Training in SLD for Primary and Secondary School Principals as well as key staff members.

This strategy has been developed to work in conjunction with the existing DEECD Course '*Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading*'.

The Australian Government Department of Education reveals that quality teaching can overcome location and other disadvantages and is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement.<sup>4</sup>

Research<sup>5</sup> also reveals that Professional Development can positively impact a teacher's ability to teach students with (S)LD, however the opportunity for the majority of principals and practicing teachers in Victoria to participate in such PDs has been extremely limited to date.

In order to increase the educational and wellbeing outcomes for students with SLD, and meet the DEECD's 10-year Plan the skill and knowledge of principals and teachers needs to increase, which can be accomplished through implementing a professional development strategy.

The PD strategy put forth will ensure every State school has staff members that can ultimately spearhead the support of students with SLD within their school.

The recommended training strategy takes a **Whole School Approach**, to ensure these students (diagnosed or suspected) have comprehensive and coordinated access and support -- including intervention, accommodation, and remediation – in the learning environment. There is also a focus on improving student wellbeing.

**It is important to note that the strategies and teaching methods that are effective for students with SLD will benefit ALL students.**

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<sup>4</sup> [smarterschools.gov.au](http://smarterschools.gov.au)

<sup>5</sup> *General Educators' In-Service Training and Their Self-Perceived Ability to Adapt Instruction for Students With IEPs*. Authors: Karl W. Kosko & Jesse L. M. Wilkins Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

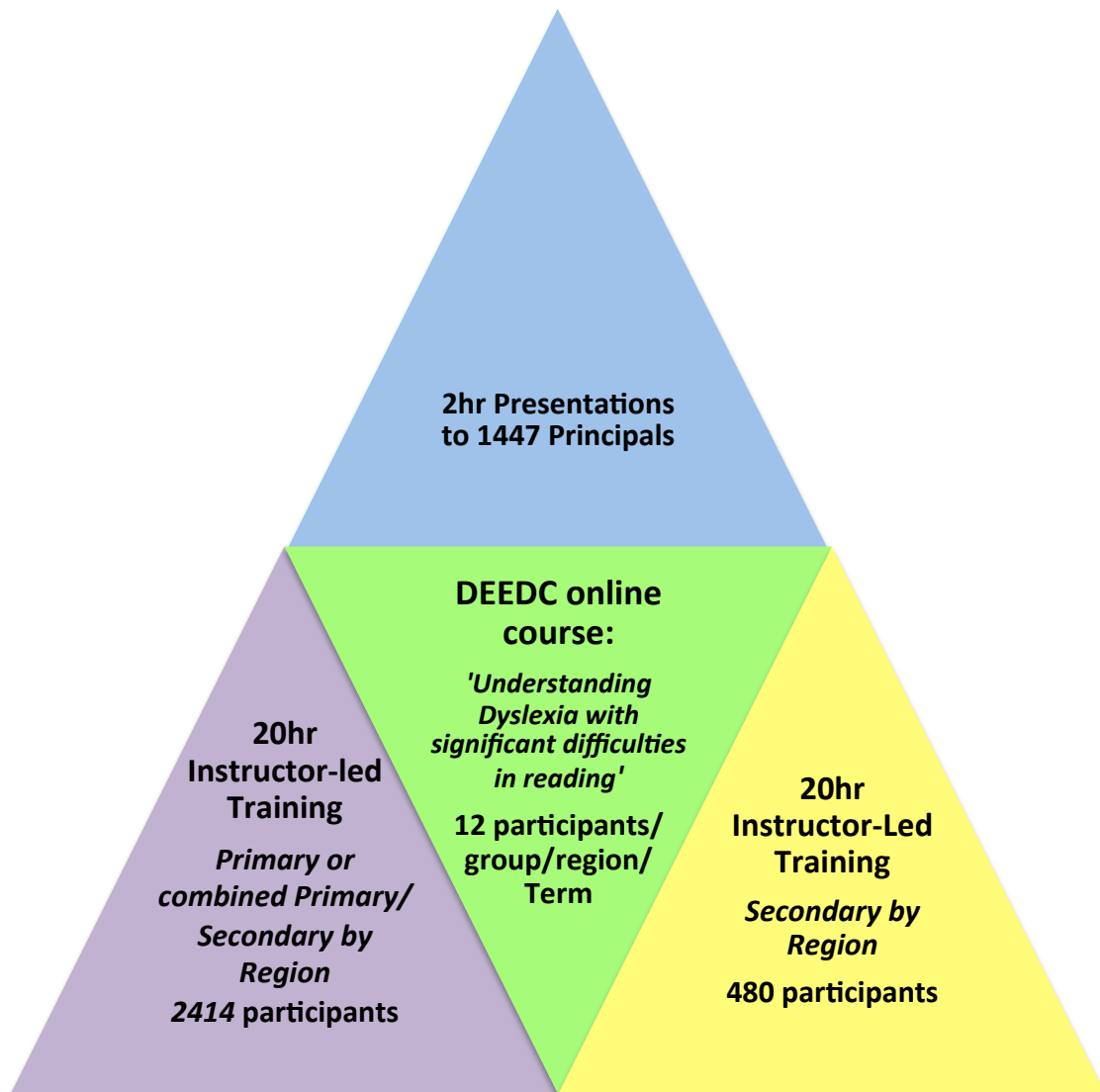
The recommended strategy is a 2-prong approach, which specifically targets:

- **State Primary, combined Primary and Secondary School and Secondary School Principals\***
- 2 key people at every State Primary, combined Primary and Secondary School and Secondary School\* to spearhead SLD/dyslexia:
  - **State Primary School Literacy Coordinators, or Learning Support Coordinators and Lead Teachers;**
  - **State Secondary School Literacy Leaders, Numeracy Leaders and Literacy Intervention, or Manager Learning & Support, etc. staff.**

Further details on each recommended component of the In-Service Training are provided on the pages that follow.

\*The State 78 Special Schools and 4 Language Schools are not included.

**Overview of Priority 3: In Service Training**



**Target: State Primary and Secondary School Principals**

Principals play a critical role establishing a school culture as well as setting the direction of a school. It is the Principal's leadership that can ultimately improve both the quality of education delivered at a school as well as the educational outcomes for *all* students.

With an estimated 10% of school-aged children with SLD/dyslexia attending any given school, it is imperative that Principals are given the tools to help them improve the educational and wellbeing outcomes of these students. It is also crucial that they improve their understanding and responses to SLD in order to change current attitude.

Based on this it is recommended that a 2-hour presentation on SLD be delivered to every State Primary and Secondary School Principal. The presentation will include:

- An overview of SLD and the issues they cause;
- Academic modifications that are low cost or free and easy to implement that will foster continuous SLD/dyslexic support;
- An overview of the DDA in relationship to SLD/dyslexia and a school's legal obligations and responsibilities;
- An understanding of how to build a supportive, SLD/dyslexic friendly-school, including implementing attitudinal change and policy development through implementation.

**Target: Primary and Secondary School Lead Teachers**

The second component of the In-Service Training Strategy is to deliver 20 hours of instructor-led training in SLD to three key teaching staff members of each State Primary and Secondary School.

The primary objective of the Training is to ensure every State school has staff members that can ultimately spearhead the support of students with SLD within their school. The Training Learning Outcomes will include:

- The skill to identify a student with an SLD as soon as possible;
- The capacity to contribute to the development of an Individual Learning Plan or Accommodation Plan with appropriate and realistic goals;
- The ability to quickly implement best practice strategies that offer support and accommodation;
- The capability to contribute to the whole school approach by supporting the development of skills for school colleagues;
- The competency to develop a partnership between parents/carers and the school to further support the learning process.

The school staff members that are recommended to participate in the proposed Training are as follows:

- **Primary School** – Literacy Coordinators, Learning Support Coordinators or a Lead Teacher (2 members of staff/school);
- **Secondary School** – Literacy Leaders, Numeracy Leaders and Literacy Intervention, Manager Learning & Support, etc. (2 members of staff/school)

**In-Service Training Estimated Cost:**

<b>Principal's SLD Presentations:</b>	
# of Attendees:	<b>1447</b> <i>(Based on 1130 Primary, 77 combined Primary and Secondary Schools and 240 Secondary Schools)</i>
# of Events:	<b>16</b> <i>(Based on presentations to 90 principals/ 2-hr presentation/Region/4 Regions)</i>
Presenter Cost/2hr presentation:	<b>\$700.00</b>
<b>Total Estimated Cost:</b>	<b>\$11,200</b>

<b>Primary School and Secondary School <i>Instructor-Led In-Service PD over 4 days</i> for 2 Lead Teachers/School:</b>	
# of Attendees (2/school):	<b>2894</b> <i>(Based on 1447 Victorian State Schools; 1,207 Primary and Primary/Secondary combined and 240 Secondary Schools)</i>
Total number of Training days:	<b>112</b> <i>(Based on training on average 724 teachers/region; seven 4-day courses with 103 teachers/course/region over 4 Regions)</i>
Presenter Cost/delivery of 4 day course:	<b>\$135k</b> <i>(Based on \$1.2k day rate over 112 days)</i>
CRT Costs/teacher/day (\$300):	<b>\$3.5m</b> <i>(\$300/teacher/day over 4 days)</i>
Catering costs:	<b>\$348k</b> <i>(Based on morning tea and lunch served to each attendee/day over 4 days at \$30/day)</i>
<b>Total Estimated Cost:</b>	<b>\$3.98m</b>

Please note: Venue provision has not been included as Course could be delivered at a school facility, thus incurring no associated costs.

**Total Estimated Cost of Priority 3: In-Service Training: \$3,991,200m**



## Costing Overview

The following provides an overview of Pre-Budget Priority recommendation estimated budget:

Priority	Estimated Cost
1. SLD Advisory Committee:	\$800.00
2. Pre-Service Training:	\$8,000
3. In-Service Training:	\$3,991,200
<b>Total Cost of Pre-Budget Priorities:</b>	<b>\$4,000,000</b>
<b>Total Cost of DEECD 2013-14 Budget:</b>	<b>\$11,562,000,000</b>
<b>SLD Priority % of DEECD 13-14 Budget:</b>	<b>.03%</b>
<b>SLD Priority % of DEECD More Support for Students with disabilities (\$37m):</b>	<b>10.8%</b>
<b>Cost per student with SLD (based on a recommended expenditure of \$4m divided by 88,000 students)</b>	<b>\$45.45 total/student with SLD</b>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in order for the DEECD to reach it's 10-year Strategic Plan goals, including the priority of **improving the opportunities for all learners without exception** and **achieve large gains in literacy and maths** the learning outcomes of the 88,000 Victorian students with SLD needs to improve.

As mentioned previously, the key Victorian State SLD organisations that have developed these Priorities have done so to assist the DEECD in reaching their goals in a feasible way forward. These priorities have also been developed to complement, build-on and bring forward the DEECDs' initiatives already in place.

It is important to note that the cost to implement the setout Priorities within this document is **\$45.45/student with SLD**.

**It is also important to note that the strategies and teaching methods part of the initiatives within these Priorities would not only benefit students with SLD but would benefit ALL students.**

We look forward to working closely with the DEECD to achieve their goals, as well as our own in supporting these students.