



Minister for Education

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to advise you of the new arrangements for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 2009.

From 2009, you will have the choice to receive your EMA payment by direct deposit (EFT) into your nominated bank account, or to receive your payment by cheque. The introduction of the option to receive your EMA payment directly into your bank account will mean faster, more convenient access to your payment.

The EMA is indexed annually to the Consumer Price Index to ensure that payments reflect the increase in the cost of living. For 2009 the total yearly EMA payment for parents/guardians is \$221 for primary school students and \$443 for secondary students. This amount is split evenly between the parents/guardians and the school. Schools receive the school portion electronically in two instalments and parents/guardians also receive their portion in two instalments.

The first EMA instalment will comprise 70 per cent of the total EMA and will be paid from March 2009. The second instalment will comprise the remaining 30 per cent and will be paid from August 2009. This arrangement recognises that families incur the highest educational costs at the start of the school year. Students turning 16 years in 2009 will be paid on a pro rata basis and not on the 70/30% basis.

To be eligible to receive the EMA, you must:

- be either a parent or guardian of a primary or secondary school student up to the age of sixteen; **and**
- be an eligible beneficiary of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004 **or** be a Veterans Affairs (TPI) pensioner **or** be a foster parent; and
- submit your application to the school by the due date.

The eligibility criteria must be met as at the first day of 1st Term (**28 January 2009 which is the first day for teaching staff**) for the first instalment and the first day of 3rd Term (**13 July 2009**) for the second instalment. Any applications based on Centrelink payments that are not income tested (e.g. Carer Allowance, formerly Child Disability Allowance, Mobility Allowance and Remote Area Allowance) are not eligible unless the claimant, in their own name, complies with the second dot point above.

As you know the EMA payment is made to help you cover the costs associated with educating your children.

Schools have been advised that they must spend the portion of the family's EMA which is allocated to the school on that student, for essential educational items for which parents are normally expected to provide or pay the school to provide.

Details of the application process, eligibility requirements and the exact amount you can expect to receive in each EMA payment are also attached for your information.

You may expect to receive the first instalment of your EMA payment from March 2009. I hope this EMA payment helps you to meet the costs for the new school year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bronwyn Pike". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'B'.

Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Education

Attachment: General information for parents/guardians on the Education Maintenance Allowance 2009

School portion of the Education Maintenance Allowance

As outlined in the covering letter schools must spend their portion of the parent's Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) on essential items for which all parents might otherwise have legitimately been asked to provide or pay the school to provide. Such items could include:

- *student text books*
- *student stationery (e.g. pens, pencils, exercise books, work-books)*
- *materials for electives where the student consumes or takes possession of the finished articles (e.g. home economics etc) or the payment sought is the difference between the basic materials/services and the higher cost alternatives which may be preferred for optimum learning experience*
- *programs provided by outside specialists (e.g. visiting artists, speakers, performers)*
- *camps and excursions which are integral to the curriculum and which all students are expected to attend*
- *school identification cards*
- *school uniform (where applicable)*
- *official diary/handbook/work planner*
- *student computer printing beyond the needs of the eight Key Learning Areas (e.g. personal use).*

The school's portion of the EMA cannot be used to offset parent voluntary contributions.

Common examples of materials or services which are supported through voluntary contributions are:

- *equipment purchases*
- *buildings and grounds beautification*
- *library fund*
- *general contribution to the school.*

Schools will need to be able to inform parents on request of the cost of the items on which they propose to spend the school's portion of the EMA.

Schools are only custodians of the school portion of the Education Maintenance Allowance. If a student transfers to another school, the balance of the school's portion must accompany the student to the new school.

Any portion of the EMA which is not expended by the end of the year must be returned to the parent/guardian. However, with agreement of the parent/guardian, this money could be carried over into the next year or other appropriate arrangements made to suit the needs of the student.

Application for the Education Maintenance Allowance

Application forms

Application forms are available from your school. A separate application is required for each school if you have children attending different schools.

First instalment

You are required to complete an Education Maintenance Allowance Application Form, available from your child's school for the first instalment of 2009 by **27 February 2009**.

Second instalment

If you were paid the EMA for the first instalment **and** your child is enrolled at the same school for the second instalment, you will not be required to complete a new application for the second instalment.

If you did not apply for the EMA in the first instalment, **you must submit the second instalment application to the school by 7 August 2009**.

If you transfer your child after the 1st Term Census Day (**27 February 2009**) and prior to or on **7 August 2009**, it is your responsibility to reapply at the new school for the second instalment.

Submission of application forms

You are required to submit your application to the school by **27 February 2009** for the first instalment. You are required to submit an application for the second instalment by **7 August 2009**, unless your child remains enrolled in the same school and you were paid the first instalment of the EMA.

Note: The Department will not accept late applications.

Schedule of payments 2009

Instalment	Portion payable to	Primary school*	Secondary school*
One	Parent - 70%	\$ 77.35	\$ 155.05
	School - 70%	\$ 77.35	\$ 155.05
Two	Parent - 30%	\$ 33.15	\$ 66.45
	School - 30%	\$ 33.15	\$ 66.45
Total for 2009		\$ 221	\$ 443

*Student year level (or age for ungraded and special school students) will form the basis for calculating the amount payable to parents and schools. Students turning sixteen during the year will be paid on a pro rata basis up to and including the month in which they reach the age of sixteen.

Direct Deposit (EFT) payment option:

EFT payments can only be made to the parent's nominated bank account (for parent's choosing the EFT payment option).

Parents must advise the school if they change their nominated bank account during the year.

Cheque payment option:

Cheques payable to parents will be sent to the school for distribution. Parents must advise the school if they change their address during the year.

All queries relating to eligibility and payments of the EMA should be directed to your school.