



Ready for kinder, ready for school, ready for life

KINDER FUNDING BOOST FOR VICTORIA'S CHILDREN

Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years. The Andrews Labor Government is giving Victorian kindergarten services an unprecedented boost in funding so that all children start school ready to learn.

VICTORIAN BUDGET 2017/18

The *Victorian Budget 2017-18* invests **\$202.1 million** in the Early Childhood Reform Plan – a record increase to our state's early years services. The Victorian Government is delivering on our commitment to give every child the best start in life.

The Plan is not just about the wellbeing of children today, but the prosperity of our state into the future.

The budget includes an additional **\$108.4 million** in funding for kindergarten services to better support children who need more help, provide additional early childhood facilities, build a higher quality system, and make services easier to access.

It all starts with the early years

We all want our children to grow up ready to lead happy, healthy, successful and meaningful lives.

We know that more than any other time, the early years shape who our children will become and what kind of life they will go on to lead.

To help Victorian children get the best start in life, the Victorian Government is boosting funding for kindergartens to ensure all children start school ready to learn.

This investment is part of the Early Childhood Reform Plan, which focuses on building a system that is flexible to children's needs, welcoming to children experiencing disadvantage, and ready to deliver quality services for all Victorian children and families.



HELPING CHILDREN WHO NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

In an Australian-first, kindergarten services will receive additional funding to give more support to the children who need it most.

The Victorian Government is delivering an extra **\$55.3 million** over the next four years in 'school readiness' funding. This is an increase of around 10 per cent of total kindergarten system funding.

'School readiness' funding is a new, permanent part of the kindergarten funding model and will enable kindergarten services to improve quality and target interventions to children who need the most help to learn and thrive. This could include improved training for staff in literacy and language development, or additional support such as speech therapy, community outreach, parenting support or more time for one-on-one learning.

How many children will benefit?

Many Victorian children will benefit. Any service with a funded kindergarten program, including long day care, is eligible to receive the funding.

How much will my kindergarten receive?

The amount of additional funding your kindergarten will receive will be based on the needs of the children attending. We will use an approach which considers the education and occupation of parents to determine the amount. This is the same measure currently used to allocate needs-based funding in schools and is known to give an accurate assessment of children who need additional support.

Depending on the interventions required, some services may receive additional funding directly, whereas others will be provided support, such as a visiting professional.

When will my kindergarten receive the extra funding?

This is a significant change to the way that kindergartens are funded. The additional resourcing will begin from 2019, starting in the areas that need it most, and will be progressively rolled out over several years. This will allow time for the Department of Education and Training to work with the sector to put systems in place that will ensure the funding flows smoothly.

How can the funding be spent?

School readiness funding will be able to be used for a range of practical interventions tailored to the specific needs of the children attending each service. This could include improved training for staff in literacy and language development, or additional support such as speech therapy, community outreach, parenting support or more time for one-on-one learning.

To guide the interventions kindergartens use, we will develop evidence-based practices in consultation with experts and the sector. The Department will also employ additional staff with early childhood expertise to help services plan and identify the best ways to use the funding to benefit their children.

DELIVERING MORE EARLY CHILDHOOD FACILITIES

We will provide **\$10 million** to build early childhood facilities at government primary schools.

Starting school is a major transition for children and their families. Having early childhood facilities on school sites makes it easier for families to access early childhood facilities and provides children with a more stable transition from kinder to school.

We will work with local government to identify the best locations for these facilities and explore options to create integrated children's centres, which bring together a range of education, care, health and support services.

This adds to the \$60 million that the Victorian Government has already committed to early years infrastructure between 2015 and 2018.

We are also providing an additional **\$1.1 million** to reform funding for non-government schools to encourage more to offer a kindergarten program, particularly in low socioeconomic areas. These changes will start in 2019 following consultation with the sector.

CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR KINDERGARTENS

Victoria's kindergarten services are among the best in the country, but we need to make them even better to meet the needs of every child and every community. This is why we are significantly increasing the amount of support provided to kindergartens to improve their quality.

We will provide **\$4.6 million** in grants directly to services. This will mean that the kindergartens that need the most support will be able to access intensive coaching, training and advice.

All services will benefit from **\$18.2 million** in additional support including new DET staff with early childhood expertise to help services improve children's outcomes.





SUPPORTING MORE CHILDREN TO ACCESS KINDERGARTEN

To ensure that all children get the most out of kindergarten the Victorian Government is providing extra funding to programs that improve access and inclusion.

Early Start Kindergarten

The Victorian Government recognises that starting kindergarten at age three can have profound benefits for children.

We will provide **\$6.3 million** to meet increasing demand for the Early Start Kindergarten program, and continue to offer two years of free kindergarten to Koorie children and children known to child protection.

Uptake of the program has continued to grow, increasing by 127 per cent over the last four years.

Participation in the program is a direct result of the hard work of our partners in the sector, local government and the community.

Pre-Purchased Places

The Victorian Government will make the Pre-Purchased Places program a permanent part of the kindergarten system, by committing **\$2.3 million**.

The Pre-Purchased Places program reserves kindergarten spots for vulnerable children (such as those known to child protection, refugees and Koorie children) so that they can still attend even if they miss the enrolment dates.

The Pre-Purchased Places pilot in 2016 was highly successful, with over 90 per cent of the places taken up by children who would not otherwise have had access to kindergarten.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support

The Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) program supports the inclusion of children with a range of needs, including severe disabilities, who could not attend kindergarten without personalised support.

The Victorian Government is committing an additional **\$5 million** over two years to expand KIS to help more children with disabilities attend and participate in kindergarten each year.

EXPANDING CENTRAL ENROLMENT

The Victorian Government will invest **\$5.5 million** to support local governments to expand and enhance central enrolment. This is part of the broader collaborative work on a stronger system under a compact between local government, the Department and the Department of Health and Human Services. More information about the compact is overleaf.

Central enrolment provides a single point of contact for families to access kindergarten in their area. It also allows local governments to establish closer links between other important services like the Maternal and Child Health Service to improve the early identification of children who need more support.



PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

An essential element of a better early childhood system is strengthening how we work with local government. *Supporting Children and Families in the Early Years: A Compact between the Department of Education and Training, Department of Health and Human Services and Local Government (represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria)* has been agreed to formalise a closer working relationship to lift outcomes for young children and families. It is a commitment to work together in new ways to improve joint planning, coordination and information sharing to better support children and families wherever they live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Minister's Early Childhood Development Expert Panel and the Department's Early Childhood Development Advisory Group have provided valuable insights that informed the Plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the Plan and how it affects you, visit

www.education.vic.gov.au/ecreform

