

EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE PROGRAM

What is the Early Childhood Language Program?

The Victorian Government has invested \$17.9 million over four years to create a program that actively encourages children at kindergarten to learn in another language: the Early Childhood Language Program.

The program began in 2019 and delivers play-based learning in up to 20 languages in approximately 160 kindergarten services across Victoria. There are two program types:

- the ***Bilingual Kindergarten Program*** where children in 10 services will learn in another language for up to 7.5 hours a week, which is half of their funded kindergarten program.
- the ***Learn Languages at Kindergarten Program*** where children in around 150 services will learn in another language for up to three hours per week.

What are the benefits for children?

Education experts have found that there are many benefits in learning additional languages at a young age, including:

- increased reading and writing skills
- cognitive flexibility
- strengthened brain development
- improved problem solving skills.

Learning in another language gives children a richer understanding of how languages work and fosters their literacy skills. For those children already fluent in another language, it can bolster self-esteem and strengthen cultural identity.

The language program recognises that by encouraging diverse language skills in our kindergarten services, Victorians can build stronger local communities and prepare children for an increasingly connected world later in life.

How were kindergarten services selected to deliver the program?

Kindergarten services were selected to deliver the program through an expression of interest process that ran in 2018. Kindergarten services participating in the program are meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standard and have demonstrated strong consultation with families and communities.

Kindergarten communities from across the state are represented in the program, with one third of kindergarten services located in regional locations. The program will reach approximately 5,000 children per year and is offered at no additional cost to parents.

How does the program work?

Kindergarten services will deliver the program in a way that reflects the context of their local community and incorporates children's interests. The program will align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and children will be encouraged to learn through play, exploration and problem-solving in another language.

Kindergarten services will embed the program in everyday learning and routines and support play, art, music and stories in the language being delivered.

Qualified early childhood teachers and educators with language skills will deliver the program in collaboration with existing kindergarten teachers.

Which languages will be delivered?

Kindergarten services chose their languages based on a combination of factors:

- consideration of local communities
- the views of parents and families
- if children can learn the same language at primary school
- the availability of qualified early childhood teachers with language skills.

Kindergarten services have selected to deliver the following languages:

Arabic	Indonesian
Auslan	Japanese
Chinese	Karen
Hakha Chin	Punjabi
French	Spanish
Greek	Vietnamese
Hebrew	Up to 5 different Aboriginal languages
Italian	

Information about the Victorian Government Early Childhood Language Program is located on the Department website www.education.vic.gov.au/eclanguages