

# KINDERGARTEN FOR EVERY THREE-YEAR-OLD



**The Victorian Government has committed almost \$5 billion over ten years so that every child in the state will have access to a kindergarten program for three-year-olds. This means that an extra year of play-based learning, led by a teacher, will be added to Victorian children's education.**

## WHERE WILL THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN ROLL OUT FIRST?

This is a landmark reform. It's the largest early childhood investment in the state's history, and it will take time. There will be a phased approach to delivering subsidised kindergarten for three-year-olds, focusing first on the areas where there is existing infrastructure capacity to meet the needs of local families – in regional and rural Victoria. These locations are also areas where children can sometimes have less access to educational opportunities.

In 2020, services in the following six local government areas (LGAs) will be funded to deliver up to 15 hours of kindergarten programs for three-year-olds:

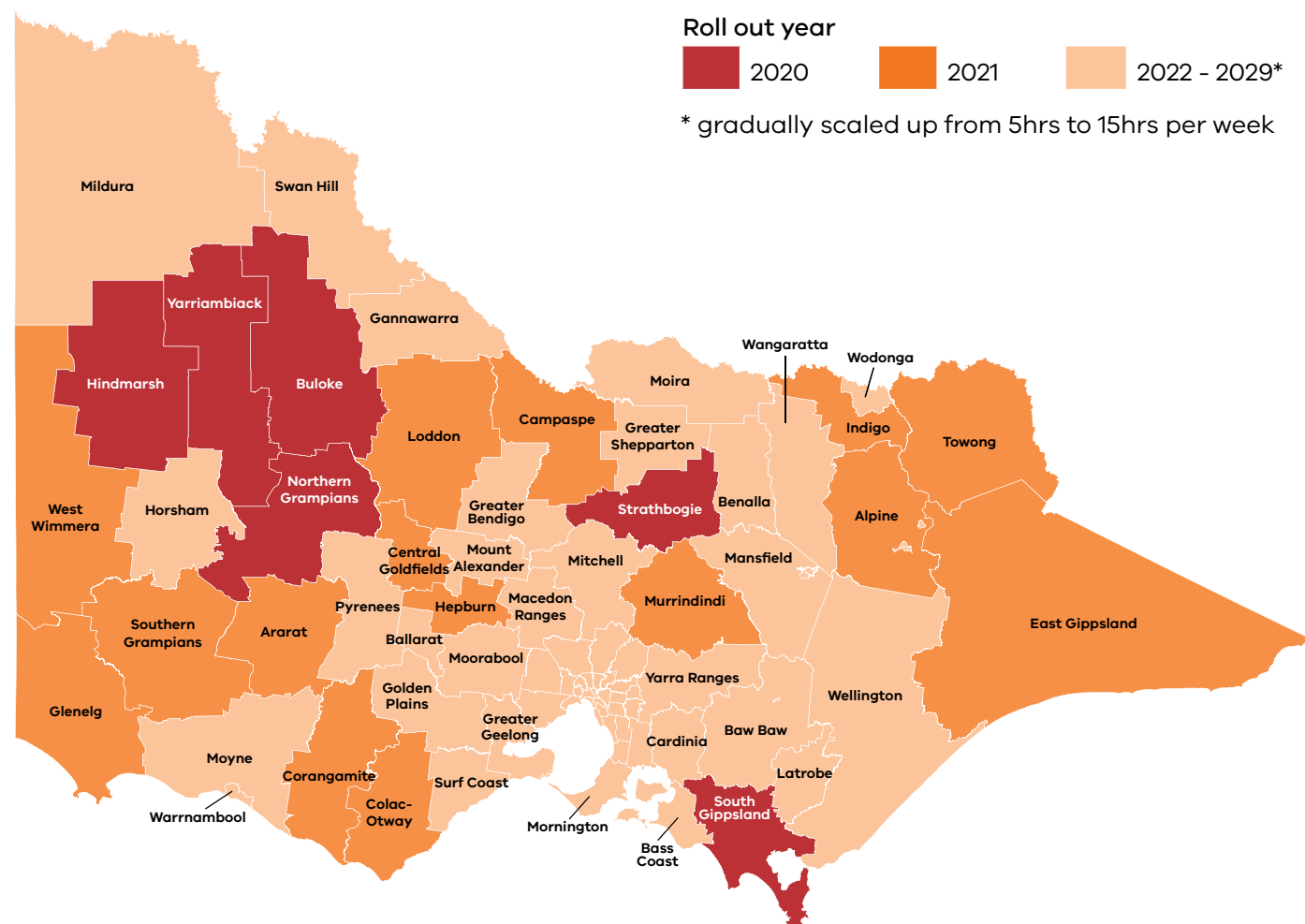
- Buloke
- Hindmarsh
- Northern Grampians
- Yarriambiack
- South Gippsland
- Strathbogie

In 2021, services in the following 15 LGAs will also be funded to deliver up to 15 hours of kindergarten programs for three-year-olds:

- Alpine
- Ararat
- Campaspe
- Central Goldfields
- Colac-Otway
- Corangamite
- East Gippsland
- Glenelg
- Hepburn
- Indigo
- Loddon
- Murrindindi
- Southern Grampians
- Towong
- West Wimmera

In 2022, three-year-old Victorian children across the rest of the state will have access to five hours in a kindergarten program delivered by a teacher.

This will then progressively scale up to reach the full 15-hour subsidised program by 2029.





### **HOW WILL FUNDING WORK FOR KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR THREE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN?**

Funding for these programs will work in the same way as it does for kindergarten programs for children in the year before school, with funding provided on a per child basis. Both sessional kindergarten services and long day care centres will be funded to deliver kindergarten programs for three-year-olds.

Funding rates such as Per Capita, Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Ratio Supplement will match the rates of Four-year-old Kindergarten.

The Kindergarten Fee Subsidy will be a part of all funded kindergarten programs for three and four-year-olds. The eligibility criteria will be the same as the current subsidised kindergarten programs as provided in the Kindergarten Funding Guide.

In 2020 and 2021, funding will be provided to services offering a minimum of five hours of service provision per week in their kindergarten programs for three-year-olds. Services providing between five and 15 hours of kindergarten for three-year-old children will receive child-level funding for every hour they deliver. For example, if a three-year-old child is enrolled in a kindergarten program for 7.5 hours per week, they will attract half of the child-level funding that a child enrolled for 15 hours would attract.

Early Years Managers (EYMs) have received some additional funding to help them participate in the capacity assessment and to support early planning for the reform. To further support the reform's implementation across services and meet increased demand for Three-year-old Kindergarten, EYMs will receive additional funding in line with the staged roll-out for eligible services.

### **HOW WILL EARLY START KINDERGARTEN FUNDING WORK?**

Early Start Kindergarten will continue to provide 15 hours a week of subsidised kindergarten for all eligible children up until 2029 when three-year-old children across the state will have access to 15 hours of subsidised kindergarten.

It is important to continue enrolling any eligible child in Early Start Kindergarten, even if a subsidised kindergarten program for three-year-olds is available at the service. This guarantees that children experiencing vulnerability will continue to be enrolled in the full 15 hours of subsidised kindergarten in all service settings, including long day care. It also ensures that service providers can continue to receive all funding entitlements.

Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through Early Start Kindergarten, even in instances where the three-year-old group(s) is being offered fewer than 15 hours. Applications can be submitted through the Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system.

### **WHAT SUPPORT FUNDING WILL BE AVAILABLE?**

All the support funding that is currently available to subsidised kindergarten programs for four-year-olds will be on offer to support kindergarten programs for three-year-olds. To do that, additional funding will be supplied to ensure that three-year-old children with a disability or developmental delay can access and meaningfully participate in kindergarten programs, including through Kindergarten Inclusion Support and the provision of additional preschool field officers.

Pre-purchased places (PPP) are kindergarten places funded by DET for vulnerable or disadvantaged children. Services providing kindergarten programs for three-year-olds will be able to apply for PPPs.



The Government will also be extending the Australian-first school readiness funding initiative so that three-year-old children also are able to get the most out of kindergarten. This will roll out at the same time as subsidised kindergarten for three-year-olds and will be available in both long day care and sessional kindergarten services. Services will receive a school readiness funding allocation to support both three and four-year-old children enrolled in funded kindergarten programs with funding allocated based on levels of educational disadvantage.

## **HOW WILL THE GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS NEEDED?**

We will be investing \$1.68 billion over the next decade to support the building and expanding of kindergarten facilities across the state to make sure three-year-old children have the infrastructure they need to attend kindergarten.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) will be working with stakeholders to ensure this funding is invested where it is most needed. To inform this approach, DET is undertaking a state-wide kindergarten capacity assessment process.

## **IS FUNDING AVAILABLE NOW?**

Yes, the Children's Facilities Capital Program (CFCP) will continue to provide funding support for existing and growing demand for Four-year-old Kindergarten programs on a co-contribution basis. This year's CFCP will also support the iterative roll-out of Three-year-old Kindergarten, as the mechanism through which the first instalment of infrastructure grants are provided. Applicants will now be able to seek Government co-contribution for projects that create three-year-old as well as four-year-old capacity.

The CFCP process will be used for the grant round to open soon after the Budget. Future Government investment will be informed by the current capacity assessment survey and consultation with the sector.

Major Grants under the CFCP create new, and upgrade existing, infrastructure for kindergarten programs and associated services.

Minor Grants under the CFCP support modest but important infrastructure upgrades as well as the purchase of new computers, tablets and televisions to improve the quality of the learning environment at funded kindergarten services.

Both Major and Minor Grants are available to Victorian local councils, not-for-profit community organisations and schools for facilities that will offer funded kindergarten programs for three and four-year-old children.

For further information on the CFCP, visit:  
**[www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/pages/capitalprogram.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/pages/capitalprogram.aspx)**

## **WHAT IS THE KINDERGARTEN CAPACITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS?**

To ensure that the Government is investing in the most effective ways possible and to provide the right support to services, we need a more detailed understanding of services' physical facilities and current workforce.

From May 2019, every kindergarten and long day care facility in Victoria will be asked to take part in a survey about their existing infrastructure and workforce capacity. Services in the 2020 and 2021 roll-out areas, as well as those in the parts of the state experiencing high growth, will be the first in line. This will enable DET to be as responsive as possible to local opportunities and needs.

As part of the survey, services will be asked to answer a range of questions regarding the dimensions of their facilities, the number of enrolment places on offer, and workforce requirements.

Ernst & Young has been appointed to partner with DET in undertaking this survey. Ernst & Young is in the process of contacting Local Government, providers and services regarding specific arrangements, which will include representatives coming to meet with services to work through survey questions together.

Pre-assessment information will be given to service providers ahead of visits to ensure the survey is conducted as efficiently as possible. We will also take steps to minimise disruption to programs during the survey process.



## HOW WILL YOU BE DEVELOPING THE WORKFORCE NEEDED TO DELIVER THESE PROGRAMS?

We know that teachers and educators will be the backbone of this reform. The Victorian Government is investing in the early childhood workforce to increase the number of teachers and educators, and to provide support and professional development for existing workers.

The 2019/20 Budget includes \$92.4 million to attract and retain the workforce needed by providing more scholarships, incentives, mentoring and opportunities for professional development. This also includes the promotion of early childhood careers.

Scholarships and incentives are available to attract new people to the field, to support people who have already begun their studies to become teachers, and encourage existing educators to upskill.

Scholarship funding is up to \$34,000 towards a degree qualification or up to \$24,000 towards a postgraduate qualification to cover costs such as course fees, study materials and related expenses.

Incentive payments of up to \$9,000 will also be available for early childhood teachers choosing to teach in the 21 local government areas where kindergarten for three-year-olds will be rolled out first.

Workforce funding will also provide mentor support for provisionally registered early childhood teachers to develop their professional practice and become fully registered. Funding is available for kindergarten services employing a provisionally registered teacher, along with a pool of mentors provided by Gowrie Victoria on behalf of DET. Beginning teacher conferences will be held to further support graduate teachers at the start of their careers.

More information can be found at:

**[www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/scholarships.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/profdev/Pages/scholarships.aspx)**

## WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WILL BE PROVIDED TO SUPPORT THIS CHANGE MANAGEMENT?

Funding has been provided to the sector in order to support early planning and to enable them to adapt to any changes associated with the reform.

EYMs and LGAs across the state are eligible to receive additional funding to help them take part in the capacity assessment and to support early planning for the reform.

Community-based services in the 2020 and 2021 roll-out areas are also eligible for additional funding to assist them in preparing to deliver kindergarten programs for three-year-olds.

A range of resources will also be available to support the teaching of younger children, including toolkits and formative assessment tools.

## HOW OLD DO CHILDREN HAVE TO BE TO ATTEND A PROGRAM?

Services can work with families of children born between January and April to decide whether to enrol their children in the year they turn three, or the following year. These decisions will be up to individual families, and factors that might be taken into consideration include the individual child's developmental and learning levels, family circumstances and potential school starting ages.

Under the National Quality Framework, the minimum educator to child ratio for children under three is 1:4, while for children over three years of age the ratio is 1:11. Children under three will not be able to attend a funded kindergarten program until they turn three, unless the service has sufficient staff to cover the required ratios. Services are encouraged to consider offering orientation sessions for two-year-old children to attend in the weeks prior to the child turning three to support their transition into the program.

Where children do not attend from the beginning of the kindergarten year because they turn three between January and April, services must waive parent fees for this period. If a deposit is charged, it must be offset against fees once the child commences kindergarten. Service providers are strongly encouraged to waive any deposits for families experiencing vulnerability. Services will receive a full year of child-level kindergarten program subsidy for enrolled children who do not attend until they turn three.





### **HOW WILL PRIORITY OF ACCESS GUIDELINES WORK FOR ENROLMENTS?**

Services must first apply the DET's Priority of Access criteria, and following this they may then apply locally developed criteria. The full Priority of Access criteria can be found in the Kindergarten Funding Guide.

DET's Priority of Access guidelines are an important way to ensure that kindergarten programs are available to those children who stand to benefit the most from attending.

In mixed-age groups, the Priority of Access guidelines will equally prioritise three and four-year-old children considered vulnerable under the policy. Where programs for three and four-year-olds are provided separately, the Priority of Access criteria should be applied separately for each age cohort.

DET staff will be able to offer advice and support to services in working through these guidelines to make sure children are able to access quality kindergarten programs.

### **WILL THE DEPARTMENT FUND A SECOND YEAR OF KINDERGARTEN FOR THREE-YEAR-OLDS?**

Children accessing Three-year-old Kindergarten will transition to the kindergarten program for four-year-olds in the following year.

Children meeting the criteria for a 'second year' of kindergarten for four-year-olds (with a developmental delay or disability) will be eligible to access one additional year of kindergarten prior to starting school.

### **HOW WILL OUR BASE RURAL FUNDING BE AFFECTED?**

All rural services will receive base funding if their total three and four-year-old enrolments are below 18 equivalent enrolments for 15 hours per week.

Services will receive child-level funding for every hour they deliver. For example, if three-year-old children are enrolled in a kindergarten program for 7.5 hours per week, two children will make up one equivalent enrolment. If three-year-old children are enrolled for five hours of kindergarten per week, three children would make up one equivalent enrolment.

Each enrolment over 18 equivalent enrolments will receive per capita funding at the rural rate.

### **HOW WILL WE ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT HOW MANY THREE-YEAR-OLD ENROLMENTS WE HAVE?**

DET will collect information about your Three-year-old Kindergarten enrolments through the Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system. DET will provide more information about this shortly.

### **HOW WILL YOU SUPPORT STAFF AND PROVIDERS WITH THE TRANSITION?**

We understand that this is a significant and sustained change for kindergarten service providers and staff, and we will be working hard to support you. DET has significantly increased the numbers of early childhood specialist staff in regional offices, and by 2021 these new branches will be in all 17 DET Areas across the state.

These regional professionals will be key contacts for providers and will be able to support you over the roll-out period, providing resources and advice.



We recognise that the success of this reform rests on the interaction between educators and children, and we want to be encouraging the best ways to make this interaction educationally rich and developmentally supportive.

The Government will be investing \$22 million to support practitioners to deliver quality educational programs, including through professional learning opportunities for teachers and educators, access to tools to help tailor learning strategies and capacity-building resources and supports to strengthen day-to-day practice, particularly with teaching younger children.

### **MY SERVICE IS IN THE FIRST ROLL-OUT AREA. WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?**

We appreciate for services in the first roll-out areas, this will mean having to work quickly to prepare for 2020.

DET will provide localised assistance to work through the process with you to allow you to do what you do best: support the learning and development of Victorian children. This will include continuing to promote quality provision and offering area-based support to services as the roll-out occurs.

Employment incentives will soon be available to attract existing teachers in the initial six roll-out local government areas for subsidised kindergarten for three-year-olds. If you would like to register your interest, please contact 1300 651 662 or email [early.years.workforce@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:early.years.workforce@edumail.vic.gov.au).

For contact details of your DET regional office, visit: [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx)

### **HOW WILL YOU WORK WITH THE SECTOR?**

A number of stakeholder groups, comprising representatives from peak bodies, Early Years Managers, local government, unions, experts and key members of the sector, have been brought together to advise on implementation planning and design.

We will also look for feedback on our implementation plans through a number of different channels and want to hear from all parts of the sector. There will be opportunities for a range of views to be heard, including from parents, early childhood professionals and service providers.

This won't be a "one-size-fits-all" approach, and we will incorporate what we've learned as the roll-out progresses across the state. DET will work closely with local government, service providers, peak bodies, experts and unions during the roll-out periods to support the work of everyone in the sector.

### **WHERE DO I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

For other questions, please contact your local DET office, visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/3YOkinder](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/3YOkinder) or email: [3YO.kindergarten@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:3YO.kindergarten@edumail.vic.gov.au)



