



Early Childhood workforce kindergarten programs and supports

Supports	Description
Attraction initiatives	
Encouraging people to choose careers in early childhood education	
Best Start, Best Life communications campaign	An integrated advertising campaign to attract people to the early childhood sector by raising awareness of career opportunities and the support available to study and join or re-join the sector.
Improving the accessibility and quality of pre-service training	
Early Childhood Scholarships	Scholarships of up to \$25,000 are available to support and encourage people to study to become early childhood teachers, with up to \$34,000 available for Aboriginal people to study through the Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathway Scholarships.
Innovative Initial Teacher Education	<p>Victorian educators with an approved Diploma-level qualification are supported to upskill to become qualified early childhood teachers through completing a compressed a bachelor's degree at Australian Catholic University, Deakin University and Victorian University, while continuing to work in their early childhood service. Financial support packages, mentoring and coaching are available to help students successfully complete their courses.</p> <p>Funding is also available to give 100 educators who face barriers to upskilling free access to The Front Project's Upskill Program, which provides mentoring and other supports while they study. The Innovative Initial Teacher Education (IITE) program also includes the Early Childhood Professional Practice Partnerships (ECPPP) which builds formal partnerships between kindergarten services and Victorian universities. This is aimed at supporting the provision of high-quality student placements in early childhood services, promoting early childhood careers to dual qualified students, and providing continued professional learning and research opportunities.</p>
Free TAFE	The Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, have been added to the Free TAFE course list to strengthen the educator pipeline.
Early Childhood VET placement pilot	Swinburne University is piloting a new placement model for the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, in partnership with the early childhood sector. The model integrates theory and practice in a way that enhances quality and the experience of placement for both the sector and students.
Enhancing VET learning materials	The Victorian Government is funding the development of a suite of high-quality early childhood teaching and learning materials which provide better learning and assessment resources to support the delivery of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care.
Support for early childhood educator traineeships	In partnership with Jobs Victoria, the Department is funding \$3.9 million to deliver a new Early Childhood Educator Traineeship Program, to create up to 200 traineeships in 2022-23. Priority job seekers undertake a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care while being paid to work in an early childhood service and receive wrap-around supports.

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Supports	Description
Getting people in jobs – when and where we need them	
Early Childhood Teacher Incentives Program	<p>Financial incentives to support early childhood services to recruit qualified early childhood teachers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location incentives of between \$9,000 and \$50,000 to support early childhood teachers take up a teaching position in selected services delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. • Individual Incentives of \$9,000 for qualified early childhood teachers not currently working in the Victorian early childhood sector to take up a position at any service planning to deliver a Three- Year-Old Kindergarten program in 2023. <p>Anyone receiving an incentive, and who is moving more than 200 kilometres to take up a role, is also eligible for relocation support.</p>
Early Childhood Educator Incentives Program	<p>Financial incentives to attract qualified early childhood educators to work in services delivering funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual incentives of \$9,000 for eligible educators not currently working in funded kindergarten in the Victorian early childhood education sector, to take up a role in a funded kindergarten program at any service delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in 2023. • Location incentives of \$9,000 for eligible educators to take up a role in a funded kindergarten program at selected services across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria. <p>Anyone receiving an incentive, and who is moving more than 200 kilometres to take up a role, is also eligible for relocation support.</p>
Early Childhood Jobs website	<p>Early Childhood Jobs is a free online platform for early childhood professionals to find roles at kindergarten services across Victoria. The website supports service providers with their recruitment and makes it easier for prospective teachers and educators to find jobs that suit their work preferences.</p>
Recruitment supports	<p>A recruitment kit has been developed for employers with tips and strategies to attract candidates to vacancies, including sample written content that employers can tailor for their recruitment needs. A panel of specialist recruitment agencies is also working with the Department to support eligible services and providers to employ teachers and educators</p>
Retention initiatives	
Creating an exceptional start in the profession	
Grants to support provisionally registered teachers	<p>Grants of up to \$2,872 are available to support provisionally registered early childhood teachers (PRT) progress to full teacher registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The grants can be used flexibly by services, for example to cover the cost of professional learning for the PRT, or to employ staff to backfill positions to allow mentors and PRTs to meet.</p>
PRT Mentors	<p>PRTs that are unable to find a mentor to support their progression to full teacher registration, can access one through Gowrie Victoria.</p>
Beginning Teacher Conferences	<p>Annual Early Childhood Beginning Teacher Conferences provide early childhood teachers in the beginning stages of their careers with insights from leaders in the early childhood sector who share powerful stories and evidence-based learnings to apply to their new career.</p>
Webinars for first-year early childhood teachers	<p>A series of free webinars to meet the needs of ECTs in their first months of teaching. These provided first-year teachers with practical information and tips to help get the most out of this exciting stage of their careers.</p>
End-to-End Career supports for teachers in their first five years of teaching	<p>Coaching for first-year early childhood teachers and some upskilling educators, communities of practice for second to fifth-year teachers and an alumni network are available to develop the resilience, capability and confidence of early childhood teachers who are in their first five years of their career.</p>
End to End Career Support Program: Innovation Grants	<p>Early Career Teacher Retention Innovation Grants of \$5,000 to \$30, 000 are available to encourage service providers to develop innovative place-based solutions for improving early career early childhood teacher retention.</p>
Coaching supports for early childhood teachers returning to the sector	<p>Targeted coaching support for early childhood teachers returning to the sector is available to support qualified teachers who have not taught or are returning to teach a government funded program. This will include support teachers to reconnect with current early childhood practice, including recent advancements aligned to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and National Quality Standards, Victorian early childhood reform agenda, teaching and learning approaches and contemporary pedagogical approaches in ECEC settings.</p>

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Supports	Description
Supporting a positive workplace culture	
Supporting workforce planning and management	The Employee Management and Development resource and supporting online training modules are available to all service leaders and people managers in the early childhood sector and provide tools to implement a best practice approach to ongoing management and development of employees.
Maintaining wellbeing	
Wellbeing webinars	Supporting early childhood educator mental health and wellbeing is a series of three webinars and supporting resources exploring the evidence behind positive psychology and its impacts on educator wellbeing.
Wellbeing Support Program	The Department funds a Wellbeing Support Program for staff employed at kindergarten services that are signatories to the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) 2020. It includes four free and confidential counselling sessions per year for teachers and educators, including Advisors and Activity Group Leaders.
Targeted supports for service leaders	<i>Early Learning Leadership and wellbeing – creating a thriving culture</i> webinar for early childhood service leaders explores the roles and responsibilities of an employer to protect and promote mental health and wellbeing, including obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. A subscription to the Smiling Mind Workplace Application is available until 31 December 2022.
Supporting educational leadership and career development	
Capability Assessment Guide – Tool and support	The Capability Assessment Guide and its accompanying tools support eligible early childhood teachers and approved providers to undertake the Capability Assessment outlined in the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020 and the Early Education Employees Agreement 2020 to facilitate teachers to move from Level 2.5 to 3.1 in the career structure.
Effective Mentoring Program	The Effective Mentoring Program (EMP) is a professional learning opportunity for experienced teachers to enhance their mentoring knowledge and skills to support graduate and returning teachers in achieving full registration.
Victorian Educational Leaders Program	Targeted at early childhood educational leaders and aspiring educational leaders in funded kindergartens, this program is designed to help equip educational leaders and aspiring educational leaders with the skills and strategies to support teams to improve the quality of the practice and pedagogy their kindergarten delivers. Note this program is under review in 2022 and will recommence in 2023.
Purpose and Professionalism Webinars	A webinar series focused on career sustaining factors for early childhood education professionals.
Coach and mentor training (from 2023)	A quality professional learning program targeted to experienced teachers who aspire to be early learning mentors and coaches. The program covers both the foundations of what makes a good mentor or coach and gives a strong foundation on quality in early childhood, and aims to lift the standard of mentors and coaches across the sector to improve the guidance they provide to services.
Recognising achievement	
Victorian Early Years Awards	The annual Victorian Early Years Awards celebrate early childhood leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation in improving outcomes for children and their families. Winners in each category receive a grant of up to \$15,000 to support their nominated activity or individual professional development. The finalists and winners are also eligible to win the prestigious Minister's Award.



Early Childhood access and participation kindergarten programs

Supports	Description
For children and families to participate in kindergarten	
Priority of Access	Process requires kindergarten services providers to ensure that children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage are able to enrol in programs in accessible locations. Funded kindergarten providers are required to prioritise children based on the specific criteria and work with other local services and the Department to ensure all eligible children have access to a kindergarten place.
Pre-Purchased Places	Are reserved kindergarten places for vulnerable or disadvantaged children. The Department pays service providers the full cost of a kindergarten place plus Kindergarten Fee Subsidy upfront to keep kindergarten places vacant so that vulnerable children who enrol late are able to access kindergarten.
Free Kinder	From 2023, all children in funded three and four-year-old kindergarten will be provided with a free kindergarten or low-cost program for the two years before school. There will be an additional subsidy of \$2,500 per enrolment in participating eligible sessional services and \$2,000 for children attending a funded kindergarten program in long day care settings.
The supports listed below are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children known to Child Protection , including children in out-of-home care , and children from a refugee and asylum seeker background.	
Early Start Kindergarten	Provides 15 hours per week of free or low-cost kindergarten in the year before school delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher in either a sessional (standalone) or long day care service if KFS is not available.
Early Start Kindergarten extension grant	Provides 15 hours per week of free or low-cost kindergarten in the year before school delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher in either a sessional (standalone) or long day care service if KFS is not available.
Access to Early Learning (AEL)	In identified areas provides outreach support for three-year-old children from families with complex needs. The AEL facilitator works with families to address access barriers and provide in-home learning support . Families are referred from Child Protection, Family Services and Enhanced Maternal and Child Health.
Outreach support to engage Aboriginal children and their families in kindergarten	As a result of disrupted learning experienced during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, time limited funding has been provided for 15 skilled and qualified Outreach workers to address engagement barriers for Aboriginal children and their families and support transition and ongoing participation in education.
Koorie Kids Shine	Koorie Kids Shine promotes the benefits of kindergarten to Aboriginal families and communities. A range of materials and messages are developed and distributed a key point throughout the year to boost participation by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten.
Early Start Bright Future	The Early Start Bright Future Project, delivered by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, is a DET funded program of work focussed on building the Child and Family Services sector's understanding of early years services so that they can effectively secure access for vulnerable children and families (particularly kindergarten), including children in out-of-home care.
Outreach support to engage CALD children and their families in kindergarten	As a result of disrupted learning (as above) and to address barriers to kindergarten engagement and participation experienced by vulnerable CALD children and families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach workers in eight metropolitan LGAs to work directly with early childhood services and vulnerable families from CALD backgrounds • A Family Learning Support Program for families residing in public housing in Ascot Vale, Carlton, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Flemington, North Melbourne and Richmond delivered by a bi-cultural workforce with skills and expertise in early learning and parenting support.
For children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds	Funded kindergarten services can use free interpreters to speak to families. Families can also use free interpreters to speak to the Department of Education and Training about kindergarten.
Kindergarten Kids Love to Learn	Translated material about a range of supports, including digital stories, translated brochures and fact sheets for parents on benefits of kindergarten, what it is, how to enrol and how to contact the Department of Education and Training.
"Kindergarten to School" Webinars	Videos for families about the transition from kindergarten to school designed by Foundation House in consultation with community members and are available in the Arabic, Dinka, Hakha Chin and Karen languages.

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Supports	Description
For kindergarten services to increase access and inclusion	
School Readiness Funding	Available to support children in all funded kindergarten services in Victoria from 2021, in all kindergarten settings, including long day care, and for both three and four-year-old children. It funds programs and supports that build the capacity of kindergarten services, educators and families to support children's learning and development outcomes. The amount of School Readiness Funding each service receives is based on the level of need of children enrolled at the service. Funding can be used to offer evidence-based programs that support children's learning and development, focusing on three priority areas: communication, wellbeing and access and inclusion.
Foundation House Early Years Program	Provides training and advice to early years services on the best ways to engage with and include Victorians from a refugee or asylum seeker background .
Kindergarten Inclusion Support	The program enhances and builds the capacity of funded kindergarten programs to support the access and participation of children with disability and high support needs and/or with complex medical needs . It aims to enhance the capacity of the early childhood educators to provide a program that is inclusive of all children.
Preschool Field Officer (PSFO)	The PSFO program is designed to provide practical advice and support to Victorian government funded kindergarten services to build their capacity to provide for the access, learning and development, and meaningful participation of children with additional needs .
Early Childhood LOOKOUT	LOOKOUT centres are designed to boost the capacity of schools, ECEC services, carers, child protection practitioners and out-of-home care services to improve outcomes for children and young people living in out-of-home care . Early Childhood Learning Advisor work with local government and child protection practitioners to facilitate access and participation for children in out-of-home care. The program also focusses on supporting transition to school.
Flexible Support Packages	Approximately 50 packages are available to support the immediate inclusion and participation of children with complex trauma in kindergarten. Traumatic experiences during early childhood can impact a child's health, wellbeing, learning and development in a range of different ways. These difficult experiences can affect a child's feelings of safety, security and connection at kindergarten and with educators and other children. Some children will display challenging and distressing emotions or behaviour which can impact on their ability to participate fully in kindergarten. Timely support through FSP can assist with concerns about the child's inclusion at kindergarten and help educators to understand and facilitate child learning and development.
Partnerships and information sharing initiatives that support the service system's capacity to improve access and participation	
Child Information Sharing Scheme	Enables information sharing between authorised organisations to promote a child's wellbeing or safety. ChildLink is a web-based platform that will facilitate information sharing by displaying key information about a child to authorised professionals who have responsibility for child wellbeing and safety. Together, Child Link and the Child Information Sharing Scheme will help give professionals the clarity and tools they need to share vital information to help improve outcomes for children and young people in Victoria.
Early Years Compact	A ten-year agreement between the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and local government – represented by the Municipal Association of Victoria. The Compact puts in place a commitment between state and local governments to work together to improve outcomes for young children and their families. Local Compact governance structures facilitate collaboration at a local level regarding identifying and reaching children that might otherwise miss out on accessing important early years services, such as Maternal and Child Health, Supported Playgroups and Kindergarten.
Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care (OoHC)	A partnership with 11 organisations, including DET, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Municipal Association of Victoria, aimed at increasing the participation of young children placed in out-of-home-care in high quality early childhood education and care and universal services, such as Maternal and Child Health. The Agreement enables the timely exchange of information about children in out-of-home-care to local government so that children can be linked with key early years services.
Best Start	An initiative that focuses on children experiencing vulnerability and all Aboriginal children. Best Start partnerships are located in selected municipalities across the state to generate local initiatives aimed at improving access and participation of critical early years services. Partners use local data and community knowledge to identify those who are experiencing vulnerability. Communities and service providers collaborate to address issues experienced at a neighbourhood or broader level. This localised, targeted way of finding solutions to problems faced by families has been shown to be extremely effective. The program also puts in place prevention strategies, such as providing referral pathways when targeted supports are required. In 2021/22, the Brotherhood of St Laurence will provide Cross Cultural Training and coaching to Best Start facilitators.
Central Registration and Enrolment	Previously known as Central Enrolment, provides a single point for families to apply for multiple kindergarten services within a local government area, helping them secure a place that meets their needs. It also encourages closer links between Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services, family support services, kindergartens and councils, to improve the early identification and engagement of children who need more support to access kindergarten. The Department is working closely with Municipal Association of Victoria to strengthen the practice and take up of Central Registration and Enrolment across local government areas, including the development of best practice materials to support consistent, accessible and transparent registration and enrolment processes.



Early Childhood quality kindergarten programs and supports

Supports	Description
For children and families to participate in kindergarten	
School Readiness Funding	School Readiness Funding (SRF) provides funding for programs and supports, which build the capacity of the workforce and aims to address the impacts of educational disadvantage experienced by some children. School Readiness Funding supports educators to build their capacity in three priority areas, Communication (language development), Wellbeing (social and emotional) and Access and Inclusion. Eligible services also have access to Department procured allied health supports, delivered through community health services across the state.
Early Childhood Improvement Branches	The 17 Early Childhood Improvement Branches (ECIBs) bring together staff with specialist early childhood expertise to work with early childhood staff, services, providers, local councils and the community to provide practical, local support to implement early childhood reforms and improve quality. These staff also play a critical role in supporting workforce attraction, recruitment and retention, in partnership with local providers and stakeholders.
Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool	The Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool is an online, observation-based tool to support early childhood teachers and their co-educators to understand and respond to children's strengths, interests and abilities through an ongoing cycle of observation, analysis, planning, implementation and reflection. The tool will support best practice in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework Practice Principle Assessment for Learning and Development. The information generated by the Tool will also help early childhood teachers to share information with their school colleagues to support children's transition to school.
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit	The Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit provides professional practice support for services in their first years of delivering funded Three Year-Old Kindergarten. It includes a range of online resources, videos and reflective questions support early childhood teaching teams to deliver high-quality educational programs aligned to the VEYLDF and appropriate to the learning and development needs of three-year-old children.
Online professional learning	The Department continues to provide a range of free online professional development to early childhood teachers and educators to support implementation of the VEYLDF and high-quality practice, in response to emerging sector needs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of four webinars and a facilitated community of practice on guiding children's behaviour • A series of webinars on connecting assessment to practice • Professional learning on writing Transition Learning and Development Statements An Outdoor Pedagogy Portal for Victorian Educators that includes a professional learning module, online books and case studies on maximizing outdoor learning.
VCAA Early Years Curriculum Resources	The Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) has videos, learning and development plans, and other helpful resources to support the development of best practice programs and curriculum for children aged 0-8 years. These include factsheets for educators, practice guides and literature reviews for each of the five learning and development outcomes, Transition to school support for children with EAL, practice guide for supporting bilingualism and language learning in the early years, the Early Years Planning Cycle Resource, and the Improving Teaching Skills for Early Childhood Education (ITSECE) tool to enhance intentional teaching. The VCAA also run Early Years Twilight Webinars throughout the year for all professionals working with children birth to eight years.
Early Years Learning Networks	Early Years Learning Networks. From the beginning of 2021, Early Years Learning Networks are bringing together early childhood teachers and educational leaders to collectively share, reflect and deepen understanding of effective, evidence-based practices. A contribution to backfill is provided where needed to support educators to attend the Networks.
Early Learning Leadership Forums	The leadership forums bring together early childhood leaders to strengthen communication, consultation, co-design and leadership skills across the sector. Local and international early childhood experts, as well as local service champions have presented at the Forums and workshop groups have enabled collaboration and ensured local context is reflected in discussion between leaders.
Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program	Is a professional development program that provides intensive, targeted support to early childhood services with identified quality improvement needs. It aims to lift the quality of participating services to improve outcomes for children to continue their learning and development into school. The program includes a range of resources, including personalised mentoring by external early childhood professionals. Since 2018, approximately 375 unique services have been or are being supported to improve their quality through the KQIP. In June 2021, an expansion of the KQIP commenced and offers access to an additional 360 services over the next three years.
Quality Assessment and Regulation Division (QARD) Stakeholder Consultation	QARD provide service providers and sector representatives advice and consultation to support the provision of high quality services across the Victorian sector. These supports include; The communication of timely regulatory advice and guidance through newsletters and the facilitation of at least two regular meetings with Early Childhood Education and Care Regulatory Reference Group.
Career longevity support	Two free webinars on career longevity for Victorian kindergarten teachers and educators are available on demand. The webinars delve into recent research on professionalism, leadership and career longevity in the early childhood sector, as well as profiling practical strategies that maintain and build careers in early childhood education and care.