

THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN



The Victorian Government has committed almost \$5 billion over the next decade to provide three-year-old children access to a funded kindergarten program. 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 education investment in the state's history, and it will take time. There will be a phased approach to delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, 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 kindergarten programs for three-year-olds for up to 15 hours a week:

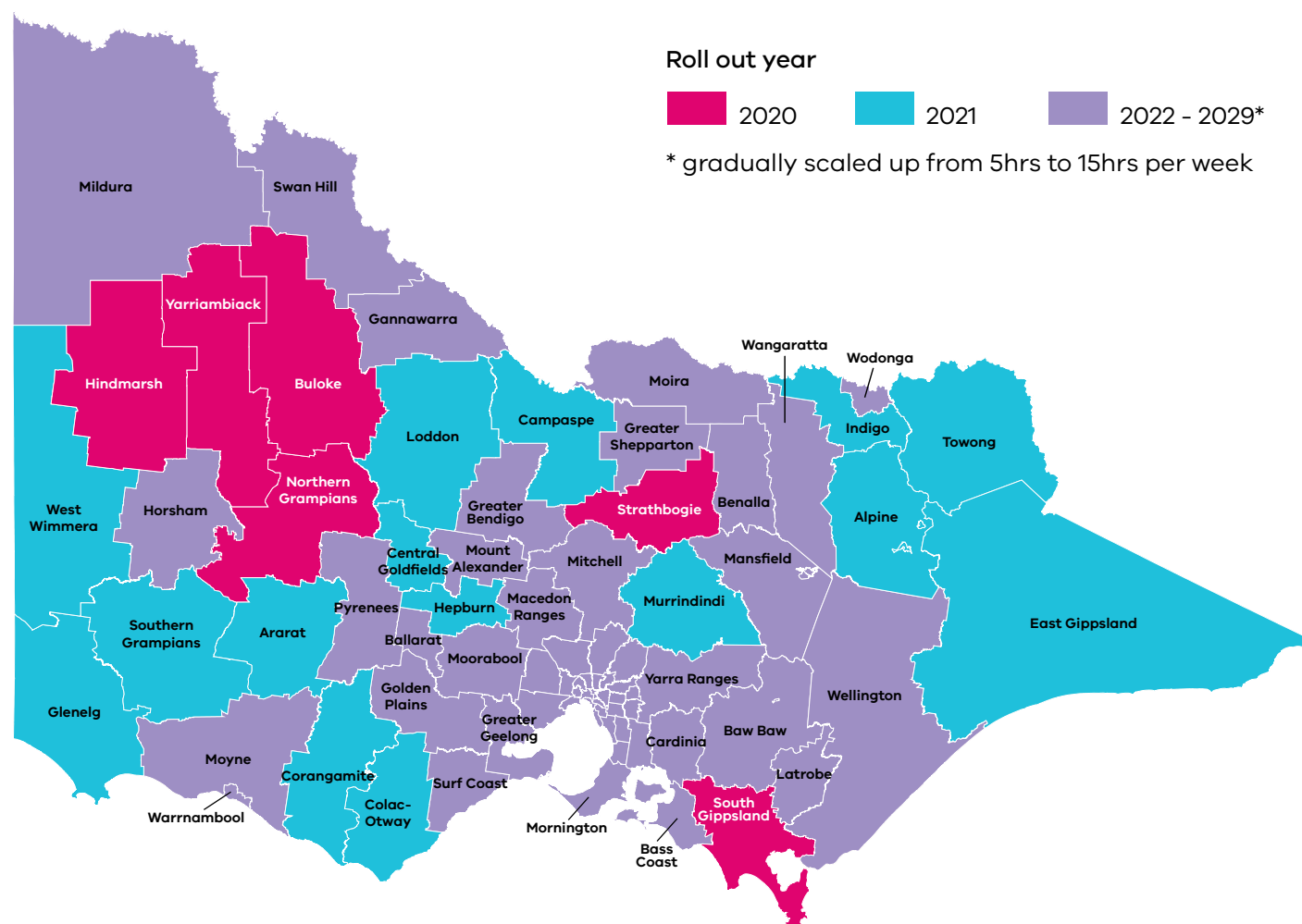
- Buloke
- Hindmarsh
- Northern Grampians
- South Gippsland
- Strathbogie
- Yarriambiack

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

- 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 children across the rest of the state will have access to five hours a week in a kindergarten program led by a teacher.

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





HOW WILL FUNDING WORK FOR THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN?

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

In 2020 and 2021, funding will be provided to services offering a minimum of five hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten per week. Services providing between five and 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten 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.

Funding rates such as Per Capita, Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Ratio Supplement will match the rates for 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 funded kindergarten programs as provided in the Kindergarten Funding Guide.

Early Years Managers (EYMs) have received additional funding to help them participate in the state-wide Kindergarten Capacity assessment Program 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 for eligible services in line with the staged roll-out.

HOW WILL EARLY START KINDERGARTEN FUNDING WORK?

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

It is important to continue enrolling any eligible child in Early Start Kindergarten, even if a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program 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 Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will be on offer to support Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Additional funding will be supplied to ensure that three-year-old children with a disability, developmental delay or with additional needs can access and meaningfully participate in kindergarten programs, including through Kindergarten Inclusion Support and additional preschool field officers.

Pre-purchased places (PPP) are kindergarten places funded by DET for vulnerable or disadvantaged children. Services providing Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be able to apply for PPPs.

The Australian-first School Readiness Funding initiative will be extended so that three-year-old children are able to get the most out of kindergarten. This will roll out at the same time as funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten 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 expansion of kindergarten facilities across the state to make sure three-year-old children have the infrastructure they need to attend kindergarten.

This investment is designed to complement and support investment from the sector. 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 Program.

IS INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AVAILABLE NOW?

The 2019 grants round for the Children's Facilities Capital Program (CFCP) has now closed. Applicants were able to seek a Government co-contribution for projects that create three-year-old as well as four-year-old capacity.

Major Grants under the CFCP create new infrastructure as well as upgrade existing infrastructure for kindergarten and other early childhood services.

Minor Grants under the CFCP support minor infrastructure upgrades as well as the purchase of IT equipment 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.

Future Government investment will be informed by the Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program and consultation with the sector.

For further information on the CFCP, visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/pages/capitalprogram.aspx

WHAT IS THE KINDERGARTEN CAPACITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM?

To ensure that we are 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.

In 2019, DET partnered with Ernst & Young to undertake a survey about infrastructure and workforce capacity. Every kindergarten and long day care facility in Victoria was asked to take part. This will enable DET to be as responsive as possible to local opportunities and needs.

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

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

We are investing \$92.4 million over five years to support early childhood teachers and educators through more professional development, mentoring and financial support to study and upskill. This also includes the promotion of early childhood careers.



Hundreds of opportunities to access financial support are available to people who are starting their study, upskilling as an educator, or already studying an early childhood teaching qualification.

Eligible recipients will receive up to \$25,000 towards a bachelor's degree or up to \$18,000 towards a postgraduate qualification to cover costs such as course fees, study materials and related expenses. Financial support of up to \$34,000 is available to Aboriginal people wanting to become an early childhood educator or early childhood teacher, including those looking to upskill.

Incentive payments of up to \$9,000 are available for qualified teachers who take up positions in kindergarten services that are delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten from 2020.

Mentoring support for provisionally registered early childhood teachers is being provided 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 are also being held across the state to further support graduate teachers at the start of their careers.

More information can be found at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/ecscholarships

WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE 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 changes associated with the reform. This includes additional funding for EYMs and LGAs across the state to help them take part in the Kindergarten Capacity Assessment Program, and funding for community-based services in the 2020 and 2021 roll-out areas to assist them in preparing to deliver Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

HOW ARE STAFF AND PROVIDERS BEING SUPPORTED WITH THE TRANSITION?

We understand that this reform is a significant and sustained change for kindergarten service providers and staff, and we are 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 staff are there to support you and your service with resources and tailored advice. They are available to help work through the process with you to allow you to do what you do best: support the learning and development of Victorian children.

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.

That is why we are 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.

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 available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx.

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 will 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.

Contact your DET regional office for assistance. For contact details of your DET regional office, visit: **www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx**

WILL A SECOND YEAR OF THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN BE FUNDED?

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 SERVICES ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT HOW MANY THREE-YEAR-OLD ENROLMENTS THEY HAVE?

DET will collect information about your Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolments through the Kindergarten Information Management (KIM) system.

HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT WORKING 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 are also seeking 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 continue to 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 contact details of your DET regional office, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx

You can also visit

www.education.vic.gov.au/3YOkinder

or email: 3YO.kindergarten@edumail.vic.gov.au



