

Best Start, Best Life talking points

Best Start
Best Life

Use the points below to help you communicate about the Best Start, Best Life reforms, and to answer any questions when talking to families in your community. Free written document translation services are available for all department funded kindergarten services if you want to get any of this information translated.

Best Start, Best Life reforms

- The Victorian Government's \$14 billion Best Start, Best Life reforms are the most significant change to Victoria's early childhood sector in a generation. The reforms include:
 - **Free Kinder:** Free Kinder is now available for Victorian 3- and 4-year-old children at participating services in standalone (sessional) kindergartens and long day care centres.
 - **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten:** the continued roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, with programs increasing to 15 hours a week across the state by 2029.
 - **Pre-Prep:** Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep with programs across Victoria increasing to 30 hours each week at full roll-out. Pre-Prep starts in 6 local government areas in 2025. Pre-Prep will be available at our service in [insert year].
 - **Early learning and childcare centres:** the establishment of 50 Victorian government-owned and operated early learning and childcare centres. These centres will be built in areas with the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access early childhood education and childcare. The first of the centres will be available in 2025.

Free Kinder

- Free Kinder at standalone (sessional) kindergartens
 - Families with children enrolled in participating standalone (sessional) kindergarten services in 2025 receive a free program.
 - For Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, this means a free program of between 5 and 15 hours per week. For Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, this means a free program of 15 hours per week. For Pre-Prep, which starts in 6 LGAs in 2025, this means a free program of between 16 and 30 hours per week.
 - Where additional hours are offered over and above the free program, these hours are optional and will incur a fee.
- Free Kinder at long day care centres
 - Families with children enrolled in participating long day care centres in 2025 will receive a fee offset.
 - The funding rates for Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten and Pre-Prep can be found on the [department website](#). Most families will still pay some fees for their child's attendance across the week, depending on the number of days attended and their Commonwealth Child Care Subsidy entitlement.
- Families don't have to claim the savings back as services receive the funding directly from the Victorian Government.
- Families can only access a funded kindergarten program and Free Kinder offset at one service at a time.
- Free Kinder is for everyone – you don't need to be an Australian citizen to access a kindergarten program.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

- Our service offers [insert number] hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten each week.
- Hours of delivery will increase statewide as infrastructure and workforce supply increase, with all services in Victoria delivering a 15-hour program by 2029.
- The roll-out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten started in 2020 in 6 regional local government areas (LGAs). The roll-out of Pre-Prep will have a similar staged approach.

Pre-Prep

- Pre-Prep will start in 6 local government areas (LGAs) in 2025, before gradually rolling out across Victoria. LGAs in the 2025 roll-out include Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire and Yarriambiack Shire.
- Led by qualified teachers, Pre-Prep will give 4-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise and learn through play.
- Pre-Prep will be delivered through standalone (sessional) kindergarten services and long day care centres.
- The roll-out of Pre-Prep will occur in stages, as it takes time to grow the necessary workforce and infrastructure, and for services to get ready to run expanded programs.
- In 2026, Pre-Prep becomes available across Victoria to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, and children who have had contact with Child Protection services. Children supported by Access to Early Learning to attend Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will also be eligible.
- In 2026, 12 additional regional LGAs are also added to the roll-out schedule. In 2026, 2027 and 2028, Pre-Prep programs can be between 16 and 20 hours per week, increasing to up to 25 hours per week in 2029 and 2030, and up to 30 hours per week from 2031.
- To view the full Pre-Prep roll-out schedule, go to vic.gov.au/pre-prep.

Play-based learning

- Australian and international evidence shows that quality play-based kindergarten programs help lay the foundation for success throughout a child's education and life.
- Through play, children engage with the people, places, and objects around them to build an understanding of their world.
- Positive attitudes towards learning, such as persistence, curiosity, and imagination, are developed during play, setting children up for a lifelong love of learning.
- In early learning environments, qualified teachers and educators design and set up purposeful play-based programs that provide children with opportunities to explore, experiment, question and discover new concepts about the world in playful ways. Programs align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).
- Teachers and educators play and explore with children, extending their learning through warm and engaging interactions.
- Children learn through play in many ways: physical play, dramatic play, sensory play, nature/outdoor play, and creative play.

Why 2 years and more time matter

- The Best Start, Best Life reforms are intended to improve early learning outcomes for Victorian children through quality education programs in the 2 years before school.
- A 2-year early learning program, including more hours in the year before school, is supported by evidence from Australia and around the world.
- Studies show children who attended at least 2 years of kindergarten had:
 - better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, independence and concentration when starting school
 - higher exam scores, and better grades in English and maths
 - better social behaviours and self-regulation.
- Starting a quality kindergarten program at an earlier age leads to positive effects on child development. Kindergarten is a safe place for children to build skills, independence and concentration while forming positive relationships and making friends.
- Increasing the number of program hours of play-based learning in the year before school will give children even greater access to the many benefits that come with quality early childhood education.