

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**

Deputy Premier

Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training – COVID-19

Minister for Education



Sunday, 9 August 2020

## FREE KINDER FOR FAMILIES THROUGH CORONAVIRUS

All kinder in Victoria will be free for Term 3, and children will be supported to learn from home thanks to a relief package to support early childhood services through the pandemic from the Victorian Government.

Minister for Education James Merlino today announced an extension to the free sessional kinder support and a further \$1.6 million in grants, which will be available via the Australian-first *School Readiness Funding* program for kindergartens to help deliver early childhood education to children learning at home.

Kinders can use the extra funding to access a range of online programs containing high-quality play-based learning activities for parents to do with their children at home.

This funding will be available to services that are not yet receiving funding through the \$160 million School Readiness Funding initiative and already able to access these supports.

Under Stage 4 restrictions in Melbourne, permitted workers are able to access childcare and kinder if there is no one else in their household who is able to supervise their child.

This may be for a range of reasons including the other parent could be a full-time student and must attend onsite, has a disability, or be working from home such that they cannot supervise the child, or there may be no other adults in the household.

Early childhood care and education services in regional and rural Victoria can continue to operate as normal under Stage 3 restrictions, with appropriate safety measures in place.

The Government will increase funding for sessional kinder services across regional and rural Victoria, meaning parents across the state will be able to send their children to kindergarten for free during Term 3. This is already the case for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire.

Sessional kinders in regional and rural areas can also now access support for unfunded three-year-old kindergarten programs. The funding will be available for not-for-profit services, including community-based, local government and school providers that are offering sessional programs and are not already receiving JobKeeper payments.

The Government will also provide any funded kindergarten service directed to close due to a confirmed COVID-19 case with extra funding to undertake an infectious clean before re-opening. This is in addition to cleaning grants worth between \$900 and \$1,500 that have been offered to all services delivering a funded kinder program.

This additional funding is part of an up to \$45 million support package for sessional kindergarten providers during the coronavirus pandemic.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

*“Our early childhood staff do a remarkable job day in and day out ensuring Victorian children continue to get the care and education they need during this challenging period.”*

*“We’re providing a funding boost to give sessional kinders financial certainty and to help kinder kids receive their vital early learning while they are at home.”*

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