

Media Release

Ms Sonya Kilkenny MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education



Friday, 14 August 2020

SKILLS BOOST FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Early childhood language teachers will get the opportunity to boost their language teaching skills thanks to the Victorian Government.

Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education Sonya Kilkenny today officially opened the 2020 training program for language teachers – which is part of the Government’s \$17.9 million Early Childhood Language Program.

Due to the current coronavirus restrictions, the two courses being offered to language teachers will be delivered remotely in 2020. The courses will be delivered through a combination of both live webinars and self-paced offline tasks, including online collaborative activities by the University of Melbourne.

The Early Childhood Language Program has led to the development of a new subject within the Master of Early Childhood course at the University of Melbourne, *Languages for Young Learners*. In an Australian-first, teaching graduates will have a unique opportunity to learn how children develop language skills in a quality, play-based learning environment.

The Early Childhood Language Program is being rolled out to about 160 services in up to 15 languages including Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Auslan, Chinese (Mandarin), French, Italian, and Spanish and will see more than 5,000 children learn a new language each year.

Children at kinders participating in the program will enjoy long-term benefits of learning in another language - including increased literacy, improved cognitive flexibility, and deeper connections with different cultures.

Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years. That’s why, in another Australian-first, the Victorian Government is also investing almost \$5 billion over this to provide access to 15 hours of universal funded three-year-old kinder.

The roll-out started in 2020 in six regional local government areas and will roll out to 15 more local government areas in 2021. From 2022, all three-year-olds across Victoria will have access to at least five hours of kindergarten. This will be scaled up to a full 15-hour program by 2029.

Quotes attributable to Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education Sonya Kilkenny:

“Learning in another language at kindergarten is not just about language, it’s also sharing and celebrating a different culture.”

“Providing this important professional development opportunity to our early childhood language teachers will help ensure a high-quality language program can be delivered at kindergartens across the state.”