

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Thursday, 17 September 2020

GETTING OUR KIDS BACK TO KINDER AND READY FOR SCHOOL

Sessional kinder will remain free for most families in Term 4 and children will be given extra support as they prepare for their transition to school, thanks to a funding boost from the Victorian Government.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Education James Merlino today announced \$26.7 million in extra funding to support early childhood services as they reopen to all Victorian children on 5 October.

Community-based, local government and school providers offering sessional programs will be eligible for about \$500 per enrolment to provide children with access to a free 15-hour program each week.

We'll also give about 5,300 vulnerable children up to five extra hours per week of kinder to help them catch up on missed or disrupted learning before starting school.

In any normal year four-year-old kinder kids would head to school and spend some time getting used to the environment – unfortunately this is not a normal year. So, we are funding extra hours so teachers can go to the kinders, meet the kids and help them feel ready for primary school.

We're also providing tailored professional learning for early childhood and school staff and developing best practice tools for Prep teachers to support play-based and differentiated learning for children at the start of 2021.

Outreach supports will be set up to re-engage children from Aboriginal and cultural and linguistically diverse communities with their learning, and kindergarten teachers will be provided additional hours to liaise with schools to support children with disabilities in their transition next year.

Services can also access more educator and teacher hours and allied health services through the Victorian Government's \$160 million School Readiness Funding initiative to support children make a positive start to school. Grants will be made available to those services not yet receiving this funding.

The Victorian Government will provide extra cleaning grants to early childhood services and assist with the cost of an infectious clean if they are directed to close due to confirmed cases of coronavirus.

Under the Victorian Government's roadmap to reopening, childcare services will be open for all children from 28 September and sessional kindergarten services will be open from 5 October for all children's attendance on-site, with appropriate risk mitigation measures in place.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

"This has been a tough year for all of us – including some of our littlest Victorians. We'll give some extra help to families and childhood services as our kinder kids return on-site and we take careful steps towards COVID Normal."

"We know that starting school is a huge milestone. Victorian families can rest assured our dedicated early childhood and school teachers are working together to support Victorian children transition from kinder to prep."

Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"The evidence shows that it's best for children to stay in their peer age group and our schools stand ready to welcome children to prep in 2021."