

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Tuesday, 20 April, 2021

FUNDED THREE-YEAR-OLD KINDER OPEN TO VICTORIAN FAMILIES

Victorian children will be able to benefit from an extra year of funded kindergarten next year as part of the Andrews Labor Government's statewide rollout of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Acting Premier James Merlino, Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt and Member for Northcote Kat Theophanous today visited Annie Dennis Children's Centre in Northcote to mark the opening of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolments for 2022.

Enrolments will soon open for about 2,500 kindergarten services in Victoria, with central enrolment programs now open in 25 local government areas and soon to open in another 29. Families should contact the centres they are interested in for more details about enrolment.

The Labor Government's almost \$5 billion decade-long reform will mean 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten programs for all Victorian three- and four-year-olds by 2029 – an Australian first.

The reform started in 2020, and children across 21 local government areas in regional Victoria are already benefiting from Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. Kinder services and providers across the remaining 58 councils are getting ready to introduce this exciting initiative, with five hours of funded programs on offer in these areas from next year.

This includes programs at both long day care centres and standalone kindergartens, with parents able to look for local services offering kindergarten programs with the Labor Government's 'Kinder Tick'.

A new round of a major statewide advertising campaign also starts this week to help families understand the benefits of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and know to contact their local services to enrol their children.

More than 2,000 people have been offered financial support packages through the Labor Government's Early Childhood Scholarship Program since it was launched in October 2018.

These scholarships support the delivery of universal funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten for all Victorian children over a decade, with the roll-out to create 6,000 new early childhood jobs.

The Labor Government is investing \$174.2 million over six years in the early childhood workforce to support, training and recruiting teachers and educators.

Scholarships up to \$25,000 are offered to help people get a bachelor or postgraduate teaching qualification in early childhood education, and up to \$34,000 for Aboriginal Pathway scholarships for vocational and teaching qualifications.

The Labor Government has added two early childhood courses – Certificate III and Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care – to the Free TAFE course list so they are tuition-fee free for eligible students.

Quote attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino

"It's wonderful to be able to support a new generation of early childhood teachers, who have chosen an immensely rewarding career that will make a difference in Victorian children's lives."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"This is an incredibly exciting time for families across Victoria, who can enrol their children in universal funded Three-Year-Old Kinder for the first time. I encourage parents to look for the Kinder Tick and contact their local services."

Media contact: Christine McGinn 0432 687 536 | Christine.mcginn@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Quote attributable to Member for Northcote Kat Theophanous

“The evidence is clear that two years are better than one when it comes to early learning, with children who start kinder at the age of three gaining academic, social and emotional benefits that last throughout their lives.”