

Media Release

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Minister for Workplace Safety
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GIVING VICTORIAN KINDER KIDS THE BEST START TO SCHOOL

The Victorian Government is making sure all children attending a funded kindergarten program in 2022 have the right support in place to help them transition from early childhood education to the start of their formal school life.

Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt today announced \$53.9 million from the Government's \$160 million *School Readiness Funding* initiative will support more than 2,500 funded kindergarten services across Victoria in 2022, helping them provide world-class early education and give children the best start in life.

The Australian-first initiative addresses gaps in educational disadvantage by building the capacity of services, educators and families to support children's learning and development. The program focuses on growing communication, social and emotional wellbeing skills, as well as improving access and inclusion.

Services will receive a funding allocation based on the level of need from children in their programs, with support available to all three- and four-year-old children in funded kinder programs including sessional and long day care.

The support allows kindergarten services to select the package of resources and programs that best reflects the needs of their children and staff – which can include programs targeting speech, language and literacy, support for culturally and linguistically diverse children and families and tools for parents to support their child's development.

Services can also use funding to tap into the expertise of speech and occupational therapists, language and literacy professionals and child psychologists – who can boost the capability of both parents and teachers.

School Readiness Funding is part of the Victorian kindergarten funding model to help improve learning and development outcomes – with more than 4,200 services receiving funding, helping over 129,000 children.

Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years, and ensuring no child is disadvantaged as they start their education. The Government is leading the nation in early childhood education, investing almost \$5 billion this decade to give three-year-old children access to an additional year of funded kindergarten programs.

From 2022, three-year-old children across the state will have access to at least five hours of kindergarten. Services will then scale up their hours to reach the full 15-hour program by 2029.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"We are ensuring kindergarten services have the resources they need to deliver high-quality programs that support all our children so that they can fully participate and get the most out of their early learning years."

"This needs-based funding will improve outcomes in communication, social and emotional wellbeing, access and participation so that all our children are on track to have the best start to school and are on par with their peers."