

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Workplace Safety
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KOORIE KIDS SHINE IN VICTORIAN KINDERS TO CLOSE THE GAP

On National Close The Gap Day, the Andrews Labor Government is supporting Aboriginal children in Victorian kindergartens to shine, encouraging greater participation in kinder and embedding Koorie culture into early learning programs across Victoria.

Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt today visited Lulla's Children and Family Centre in Shepparton on National Close the Gap Day to unveil the *Koorie Kids Shine* lunch packs, which will be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Victorian kindergartens to start conversations about the importance of early years education.

The Labor Government's Koorie Kids Shine initiative signifies the importance of Aboriginal culture and supports greater kinder participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – promoting access to 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten every week in the two years before school.

Proud Yorta-Yorta, Gunai-Kurnai, Dja Dja Wurrung, Boonwurrung, Taungurung and Baraparapa Aboriginal artist Kamara Morgan has designed the artwork for the lunch pack, postcard and magnetic photo frame for children to take home and enjoy.

The artwork centres around three meeting places representing Koorie parents, children and educators coming together for a lifelong journey through education – and will feature across the Koorie Kids Shine materials to reflect development, growth and learning, with markings showing connection to Country through play, song and dance.

An advertising campaign has also been launched across screens, print and radio, aimed at Aboriginal audiences, to improve awareness of the benefits of kinder, and to encourage Aboriginal children to participate.

The rate of participation of Aboriginal children in kindergarten continues to be strong in both Three and Four-Year-Old programs, and is enhanced by dozens of kindergartens offering Victorian Aboriginal languages as part of the Labor Government's Early Childhood Language initiative.

The Government's Early Childhood Scholarship and Incentives Program is delivering up to \$34,000 for Aboriginal Pathway recipients – in addition to the signature Free TAFE programs – encouraging Aboriginal Victorians to become early childhood educators.

The Government is investing almost \$5 billion this decade to this Australian-first reform, which provides three-year-old children with access to an additional year of funded kindergarten programs. To find out more about the Koorie Kids Shine program, visit vic.gov.au/koorie-kids-shine.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"Closing the Gap has to start young – and we're making sure all Aboriginal Victorian children get the best start in life, with great early education programs that champion Koorie culture and support our youngest learners."

"It's fantastic to launch these gorgeous, Aboriginal-designed lunch packs to encourage our Koorie communities to get their kids into a kinder program in an environment that is supported by community and culture."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"We have so many fantastic kinders in our area that support Aboriginal kids to get the best start to their education – and I encourage all local Koorie families to get their kids involved in a wonderful local early education program."

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