

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep

Minister for Environment



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BEST START, BEST LIFE: FREE KINDER IS HERE

Up to 140,000 children and families will benefit from Free Kinder this year thanks to the Andrews Labor Government's once-in-a-generation kindergarten reform making it easier, and cheaper, to give our kids the very best start.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt today visited Bambou Early Learning Centre in Glen Waverley to announce that more than 2,750 early childhood services across the state are offering Free Kinder for Victoria's three-and four-year-olds in 2023.

Ninety-seven per cent of Victoria's kindergarten providers have opted-in to Free Kinder, including sessional kinder and long day-care centres, with 100 percent of kinder services in 44 local government areas opting-in to the Labor Government's Free Kinder program.

With 90 per cent of a child's brain developing before the age of five, early education has a profound effect on the way our kids develop. That's why we promised to deliver Three-Year-Old Kinder – making sure Victorian kids are ready for school and set for life, while also saving families thousands of dollars in standalone kinder fees.

Under the \$270 million initiative, children enrolled in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will receive between 5 and 15 hours of funded learning each week, and those in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will receive 15 hours per week.

The impact is life changing. Free Kinder will save families up to \$2,500 in fees per child each year and give more than 28,000 Victorians – the majority of whom are women – greater flexibility to return to work if they choose.

Participating kindergarten programs will receive funding directly from the Labor Government, so families are not out-of-pocket and do not have to claim the savings back.

The reform is good for more than just play-based learning, too – with Best Start, Best Life investment supporting almost 8,000 construction jobs across the state as we build new kinders for a growing Victoria.

It's all part of the Labor Government's massive *Best Start, Best Life* reform – delivering Free Kinder for three and four-year-olds, creating 50 government-owned and operated childcare centres and establishing Pre-Prep, an extra year of play-based learning that will also save families money and help more women back into work.

In the coming weeks, all children enrolled in funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will receive a free Kinder Kit full of fun and educational toys, books and resources, helping them to grow and thrive through creativity and play.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt

"For young families Free Kinder means more choice, more flexibility, and more money in their pockets. With this reform we're making sure every child gets the early education they need to thrive."

"Free Kinder doesn't just give our littlest Victorians the best start in life, it also gives parents, particularly mothers, the freedom to go back to work if and when they choose."

Quote attributable to Member for Glen Waverley John Mullahy

"Our Best Start, Best Life reforms are big, bold and ambitious – and they're going to make sure that kids in Glen Waverley have the best possible start to life."

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