

Media Release

The Hon Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep

Minister for Environment



Sunday, 29 January 2023

PRE-PREP TO BEGIN ROLLING OUT IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

Regional Victorian children and kids experiencing disadvantage will be the first to benefit from 30 hours of free Pre-Prep each week, as the Andrews Labor Government takes the next step in the nation-leading *Best Start, Best Life* early childhood education reform.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt today announced the roll-out schedule for Pre-Prep – a program of 30 hours each week of teacher-led play-based learning, which will begin in selected areas from 2025, before expanding across the state.

Pre-Prep will start in 2025 in Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire and Yarriambiack Shire – before other LGAs progressively join the roll-out in following years.

We know how important early learning is to a child’s development, so vulnerable children and Aboriginal children living outside the early roll-out areas will also be eligible for 30 hours of Pre-Prep every week from 2026, while children experiencing disadvantage will be eligible from 2028.

Those able to access Pre-Prep from 2026 include children from a refugee background, children known to child protection and Aboriginal children. Children whose families hold Commonwealth concession cards will be eligible for Pre-Prep from 2028.

Pre-Prep programs will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long day-care centres, creating a high-quality, universal program that gives 4-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise, learn through play and best prepare them for their formal educational journey.

Children in metropolitan Melbourne will be able to access Pre-Prep from 2030, starting at 16 to 20 hours each week – and from 2032, all children across Victoria will be eligible for 30 hours of Pre-Prep each week.

This roll-out schedule is similar to the rollout for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, allowing enough time to develop a strong, skilled workforce and deliver the infrastructure required to support this uplift in service delivery.

The staged roll-out of Pre-Prep follows the successful launch of Free Kinder, which is now saving every family in Victoria up to \$2,500 in fees per child each year – giving more than 28,000 Victorians, the majority of whom are women, the 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.

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

“Early education has the most profound impact on a child’s development – that’s why we’re delivering Free Kinder for three and four-year-olds, establishing Pre-Prep, and upgrading or providing new equipment to every kinder to make sure kids have everything they need to get the best start.”

“First, Three-Year-Old Kinder and Free Kinder, and now Pre-Prep – these once-in-a-generation reforms will not just give our kids a quality early education, they will also give them the best start to their whole lives.”

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Pre-Prep roll-out schedule

2025

16 to 30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, Yarriambiack Shire

2026

16 to 30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Benalla Rural City, Buloke Shire, Corangamite Shire, East Gippsland Shire, Horsham Rural City, Loddon Shire, Mansfield Shire, Mitchell Shire, Pyrenees Shire, Strathbogie Shire, Wangaratta Rural City, Wodonga Rural City

State-wide: Roll-out to Aboriginal children and children experiencing vulnerability

2027

16 to 30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Alpine Shire, Central Goldfields Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Glenelg Shire, Indigo Shire, Moira Shire, Moorabool Shire, Moyne Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Southern Grampians Shire, Swan Hill Rural City, West Wimmera Shire

2028

16 to 30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Bass Coast Shire, Baw Baw Shire, Campaspe Shire, Golden Plains Shire, Greater Shepparton City, Hepburn Shire, Latrobe City, Macedon Ranges Shire, Mildura Rural City, Mount Alexander Shire, Queenscliffe Borough, Surf Coast Shire, Towong Shire, Warrnambool City, Wellington Shire

State-wide: Roll-out to children experiencing disadvantage

2029

16 to 30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Ballarat City, Greater Bendigo City, Greater Geelong City

2030 to 2031

2030: 16 to 20 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

2031: 16 to 25 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

LGAs: Banyule City, Bayside City, Boroondara City, Brimbank City, Cardinia Shire, Casey City, Darebin City, Frankston City, Glen Eira City, Greater Dandenong City, Hobsons Bay City, Hume City, Kingston City, Knox City, Manningham City, Maribyrnong City, Maroondah City, Melbourne City, Melton City, Merri-bek City, Monash City, Moonee Valley City, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Nillumbik Shire, Port Phillip City, Stonnington City, Whitehorse City, Whittlesea City, Wyndham City, Yarra City, Yarra Ranges Shire

2032

30 hours per week for 40 weeks of the year

All of Victoria