

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



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LANGUAGE PROGRAM CONNECTS KIDS GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY

Connection to culture forms a key part of a child's understanding of the world – and the Andrews Labor Government is expanding access to language education for early learners to enrich their lives and their learning.

A \$23.9 million investment from the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* will give thousands more children across the state the experience of learning in another language at kindergarten.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt today announced the continuation of the Labor Government's Early Childhood Language Program – which currently funds around 200 kindergartens to deliver three hours each week across their Four-Year-Old kinder programs in a language other than English at no cost to parents.

The program has been running since 2019, with around 8,000 children currently enrolled in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten already boosting their self-esteem and cultural identity by learning in another language.

Encouraging diverse language skills in our kindergartens builds stronger connection to our diverse local communities, preparing Victorian children for a more globalised and connected world.

Twenty languages are being delivered by qualified language teachers and supported by dedicated early learning educators – including Auslan and five Aboriginal languages – with more languages to come as demand grows for these programs.

Other languages currently on offer are Arabic, Chinese, Chin Hakha, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.

The languages are incorporated into everyday kinder learning experiences to give children meaningful opportunities to use and practise them independently, such as through stories, painting, singing, dancing and music.

The benefits of learning in another language have huge impacts in helping children to think, explore and problem solve, enhancing their reading and writing skills and developing their intercultural skills which they will have for the rest of their lives.

We know early education has a profound effect on the way our kids develop – and the Labor Government is continuing to deliver its nation-leading *Best Start, Best Life* reforms with a further \$1.8 billion investment in this year's Budget.

To find a kindergarten offering a language program, visit vic.gov.au/early-childhood-language-program.

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

"Learning another language unlocks a world of opportunity for our littlest learners, with benefits that will last a lifetime – from school to work and beyond."

"This investment gives thousands of children the opportunity to play, learn and communicate in a language other than English – helping our littlest Victorians grow and problem solve."

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