

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



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KINDER BOOST FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

All Victorians deserve access to the best education - and the Andrews Labor Government is making this easier with extra support and equipment for our youngest learners with additional needs.

Children with a disability, developmental delay and additional or special needs will get even more assistance to learn and thrive at kinder through the Labor Government's continued investment in early education programs which promote inclusion.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre Prep, Ingrid Stitt today announced \$18.1 million over four years as part of the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* to modernise and tailor support for all of our littlest learners to get the best start in life.

This funding will help make early learning more accessible, easier and more fun with a new approach to inclusion in kindergartens, through strength-based learning plans, new needs assessments and education approaches which more closely align with the landmark Disability Inclusion reforms for schools.

Children with additional needs will be further supported to learn alongside their peers with specialised equipment, including standing frames and hoists continuing to be available at no cost to kindergartens, under an extension of the successful Kindergarten Inclusion Support Specialised Equipment program.

The \$18.1 million package will also streamline applications and assessments under the Kindergarten Inclusion Support program, making it easier for kinders to hire additional staff and train existing educators in line with demand.

The investment also boosts the number of Pre-School Field Officers (PSFO), who are highly experienced professionals that work with early childhood teaching teams. The PSFOs will be placed in high-growth areas of the state to provide inclusive programs for children with additional needs to learn, contribute and grow at kinder.

This builds on the Andrews Labor Government's historic investment in our nation-leading *Best Start, Best Life* reforms which give children and families greater access to kinder. This also means more parents – especially women – can get back to work when they choose.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* provides \$1.8 billion over five years to continue the transformation of early childhood education in Victoria, making all kinder free and building \$1.2 billion in infrastructure projects, critical to the delivery of 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten each week by 2029 and 30 hours of Pre-Prep each week by 2032.

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

"Kindergarten is for all children – that's why we're modernising and tailoring support for children with additional needs, so they can fully engage in, and benefit from, two years of funded kindergarten."

"Our Best Start, Best Life reforms are transforming early childhood education, saving hard-working families money and supporting parents to return to the workforce if they choose."