

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



Thursday, 13 July 2023

NEW KINDERS BOOST BILINGUAL LEARNING BENEFITS

Language immersion has a profound positive impact on children’s learning – and the Andrews Labor Government is providing more language education to help give early learners the best start to life.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt today invited eligible Early Childhood services to apply for funding to deliver a Bilingual Kindergarten program from Term 1, 2024, which will support stronger cross-cultural learning in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs.

An investment of \$3.7 million in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* will double the footprint of the successful Bilingual Kindergarten program from 10 to 20 services – giving more children across the state increased cultural, social and educational skills and knowledge.

Around 800 children currently attend the 10 existing bilingual kindergartens where they learn in a language other than English for 12 hours of their weekly 15-hour kindergarten program.

Qualified language teachers incorporate language learning into everyday kinder experiences through fun and engaging activities like singing, dancing, painting and storytelling. This enriching learning environment boosts our littlest learners’ reading and writing skills, raises their self-esteem and strengthens their cultural identity.

In selecting their language program, early childhood service providers are asked to consider community diversity and languages of newly arrived children in their area. Service providers with a large proportion of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are also encouraged to apply to run one of the 10 new programs.

While existing programs currently offer Mandarin, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Punjabi, and Auslan, new participating early childhood services can offer any language of their choosing.

Kindergartens interested in applying are further encouraged to deliver a local Aboriginal language program and will be supported to seek Traditional Owner approval to do so.

All Early Childhood services joining the Bilingual Kinder initiative will be supported to recruit a qualified language teacher if they do not already have one within their staff.

Language education plays a vital role in building stronger local communities and supports social cohesion – strengthening understanding of others and preparing children for an increasingly connected world later in life.

The *Victorian Budget 2023/24* invests a total of \$27.6 million in Early Childhood language programs which provide around 8,000 children across the state with the chance to experience kinder in another language.

Expressions of interest close on 13 August. To apply, visit vic.gov.au/expression-interest-bilingual-kindergarten.

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

“Bilingual kinders strengthen cultural ties and connect our children to the world. It’s fantastic that 10 more kindergartens will soon be part of this extraordinary learning program.”

“Around 8,000 Victorian children benefit from our Early Childhood Language programs each year – developing their cultural awareness, strengthening their identity and boosting their confidence.”

Media contact: Nelson Barber 0473 163 333 | nelson.barber@minstaff.vic.gov.au