

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
Minister for Environment



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BIGGER, BETTER KINDERS FOR OUR YOUNGEST VICTORIANS

Victoria's littlest learners are getting improved and expanded kinders to learn and thrive in, thanks to the Andrews Labor Government's Building Blocks Capacity Grant program delivered in partnership with local councils.

Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt visited Kurmboon Child and Family Centre in Officer today to announce a \$20.5 million investment under the *Building Blocks* program for three new kindergarten projects in growing communities across the state.

Funding will build new early childhood facilities and expand existing kindergartens, creating more than 300 additional kindergarten places across the state and give families more choice of services in their local area.

Thewlis Integrated Child and Family Centre (interim name) in Pakenham will receive \$9 million to build an integrated children's centre, which includes a four-room kindergarten and three consulting rooms.

Built in partnership with Cardinia Shire Council, this facility will provide space for maternal and child health services, playgroups and parenting programs as well as allied health services and wellbeing programs – ensuring families can access the services they need, close to home.

The new centre will be located next to Pakenham North West Primary School (interim name) when it opens in 2025 and will provide up to 132 kindergarten places for three- and four-year-olds – helping more families to ditch the dreaded double drop-off and make the transition to school easier.

A further 231 kindergarten places will be provided from the partnership in the local government areas of Greater Bendigo and Mildura through a combined \$11.5 million investment in new and upgraded facilities.

Marong Kindergarten, west of Bendigo, will receive \$5.5 million to expand the existing service by up to 99 places by creating three additional kindergarten rooms and space for community services and family engagement.

Mildura Rural City Council will receive \$6 million to create 132 places at Red Cliffs Kindergarten by transforming it into an Integrated Children's Centre with kindergarten rooms, consultation rooms, toy library facilities and multi-use spaces all under one roof.

Through our nation-leading \$14 billion *Best Start, Best Life* reforms, the Labor Government is transforming early childhood education to help children thrive, save families money and support parents – especially women – to return to work or study if they choose.

As part of the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, the Labor Government is continuing to deliver the kindergarten infrastructure Victoria needs by investing an additional \$1.2 billion for new kinders at or near government and low-fee non-government schools, alongside new and expanded kinders on local government sites.

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

"We're delivering unprecedented investment in early childhood services so Victorian children can get the most out of great local kindergartens and get the best start to life."

"More funding for early childhood infrastructure projects means that service providers across the state will have more flexibility to deliver local kindergarten programs that meet the needs of our growing communities."

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

Quote attributable to Member for Pakenham Emma Vulin

"We've built a brand new kinder in Officer and we're continuing to invest in world class early learning for our growing community with another centre to open in Pakenham, giving local children the best start in life."