

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for WorkSafe and TAC



Monday, 24 March 2025

VICTORIAN STUDENTS REAP BUMPER HARVEST FROM GARDEN PROGRAM

Victorian children will be supported to develop lifelong healthy eating habits and love of the great outdoors, thanks to an Allan Labor Government program that will set up more kitchen gardens in schools across the state.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today invited schools to apply for this year's the much-loved Victorian Schools Garden Program (VSGP), which has provided rewarding outdoor education initiatives for generations of students for almost half a century.

One of this year's successful applicants will follow in the footsteps of last year's state award winner, Keilor Downs College.

A sustainable farm at Keilor Downs College has grown from a partnership between students at the school and students from The Jackson School, a nearby specialist school in Melbourne's west.

Together the students have established and maintain the farm with thriving vegie patches, a lunch area with gazebo, and a bird aviary, alongside areas to raise chickens and rabbits.

The Government have partnered with Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria to continue growing the program, which includes:

- start-of-year grants to encourage schools to undertake new garden projects or improve existing ones
- end-of-year awards that recognise and celebrate the achievements of students and school communities
- professional development workshops for teachers and volunteers to help them learn the basics of running a school garden.

In 2023, the Labor Government increased its annual funding for the program by more than 50 per cent from \$95,000 to \$145,000. This additional support enables industry experts to visit and deliver school-based garden incursions at no cost to participating schools.

This year, participating schools will be invited to a free excursion at the 2025 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show.

They will be able to enter the School's Sustainable Scarecrow competition displayed at the show. Students will also be able to visit the VSGP Grow Together Garden to learn about what it takes to grow a plant from a seed to forest or plate.

The Victorian Schools Garden Program Grants are open to all Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools, with applications for 2025 closing on 24 April. For more information visit vsqp.org.au

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Ben Carroll

"This program offers incredible opportunities for students to learn in an outdoor setting, engaging them in learning about health and wellbeing, biodiversity and the environment."

"I'm impressed not only by the fruits of the labours of the students I've met from Jackson School and Keilor Downs Secondary College, but how they are all working together towards a common goal."

Media contact: Bree Guthrie 0456 655 050 | bree.guthrie@minstaff.vic.gov.au