

Media Release

The Hon. Ben Carroll MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC



Wednesday, 17 September 2025

PREP STUDENTS TO GET A BAG FULL OF FREE BOOKS

The Allan Labor Government is helping to ease the cost of living for families by providing prep students with the tools to kickstart their love of reading and learning with a bag full of free, engaging and fun books.

Acting Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today visited Mountain Gate Primary School to share the titles of next year's books provided to around 65,000 government school students in their Prep Bags.

Prep Bags in 2026 will include five children's books, selected by a panel of experts, to spark a lifelong love of reading and to lift students' literacy outcomes. Each Prep student will receive:

- *Chooks in Dinner Suits* – written by Diane Jackson Hill and illustrated by Craig Smith
- *The Concrete Garden* – written and illustrated by Bob Graham
- *Frank's Red Hat* – written and illustrated by Sean E Avery
- *The Bin Monster* – written by Annabelle Hale
- *Sharing* – written by Auntie Fay Muir and Sue Lawson and illustrated by Leanne Mulgo Watson

The books will also be produced in Braille, with tactile illustrations by the Statewide Vision Resource Centre to support students who are blind. This will make sure every young learner can follow the stories.

Research shows how important it is for parents and carers to regularly read aloud to young children, particularly as they move from kindergarten to primary school and adjust to the next phase in their learning.

By reading together, families can help children to expand their vocabulary, make connections between spoken and written words, and strengthen the bond they share with their children.

Victoria's approach to reading, which includes mandatory phonics education, is already working to set up our youngest students for life-long reading success ahead of full implementation from 2027. This is supported by the new Year 1 Phonics Check which was introduced to Victorian government primary schools this year.

First launched in 2019, the Books in Prep Bags initiative supports children's literacy by giving families access to high-quality stories suitable for children aged four to six. More than 2.2 million books have been delivered through the initiative so far.

The Prep Bag books are selected by a panel of experts each year with titles chosen to appeal to a broad range of Victorian children and families.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll

"We're helping families with the cost of living and giving every Prep student the chance to fall in love with reading from day one."

"Every child deserves the best start to their education, and that includes access to great books – no matter their background or where they live."

"Victorian families remember what happened last time Brad Battin's Liberals were in charge of education – ripping \$1 billion out of schools, axing the School Start Bonus, the Education Maintenance Allowance, the Young Readers Program and Reading Recovery—leaving families and students worse off."

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