

# Media Release

**The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP**

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Children

Minister for Disability



Thursday, 9 October 2025

## ENABLING ABORIGINAL KIDS TO THRIVE IN KINDERGARTEN

The Allan Labor Government is supporting more First Nations children to get the best start in life, establishing the first Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) as an Early Years Management authority.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn today announced that Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) will be the first ACCO registered as an EYM, providing centralised support to kindergartens and helping teachers and educators focus on what matters most: giving children the best possible start to their education.

BADAC oversees kindergartens at Perridak Burron in Brown Hill, Yirram Burron in Sebastopol and Yaluk Burron in Ballan, supporting local families with strong and culturally inclusive early learning.

As an Early Years Management organisation, BADAC will take care of the business, compliance and operational requirements of running kinders – giving staff the backing, training and career pathways they need, and freeing them up to focus on supporting children and families every day.

From 2026, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations like BADAC will receive more funding to deliver kindergartens their way thanks to an investment of \$5.3 million that will support tailored, community-led approaches to early learning for around 350 children.

The number of First Nations children attending kindergarten continues to grow, with more than 3,700 enrolled in Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs in 2024 – the highest on record.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

*“BADAC is deeply respected in Ballarat for supporting families and children, and this new role will mean even more local families can benefit from their culturally safe kinder programs.”*

*“We’re giving Aboriginal organisations more funding and more support to lead the way in early childhood education – so that First Nations children can learn on Country, in community and with culture.”*

### Quote attributable to Member for Eureka Michaela Settle

*“Families in our community know how important it is for kids to feel safe, strong and connected at kinder. BADAC has a proud history of supporting local families, and this new role will mean even more children can thrive in culturally safe and welcoming kindergartens.”*

### Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

*“Ballarat is leading the way in early learning, with BADAC showing how community-led education can make a real difference for families. This is about giving every First Nations child the best start in life, close to home.”*

### Quote attributable to Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative CEO Karen Heap

*“We are very proud of the Early Years centres that we have established and the growth within the community over the past 5 years. Becoming the first ACCO EYM enables us to guide, support and inspire other ACCO’s across the state, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children are supported in Early Years Education.”*

**Media contact:** Philip Ritchie 0430 336 243 | [philip.ritchie@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:philip.ritchie@minstaff.vic.gov.au)