

Media Release

The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



Thursday, 29 January 2026

FREE BOOKS TO HELP FAMILIES SAVE AND HELP CHILDREN LEARN

Prep starts this week – and the Allan Labor Government is easing costs for families with Prep bags and free books.

The Prep bags include books and learning activities to help our newest students foster a lifelong love of reading.

The Premier and Deputy Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll today welcomed students, including 45 Preps, to Fraser Rise's brand new Wiyal Primary School.

It's one of 19 new schools opening this year and one of 100 built since 2019.

The school can accommodate up to 525 students from Prep to Grade 6, helping to meet enrolment demand.

This year's theme for the Prep Bags is *reach for the stars*, because we want our Preps to dream big and aim high.

The bags feature five books selected by a panel of experts and include:

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

The bags also contain a bus-shaped holder for their Youth Myki – their ticket to free travel anywhere in Victoria.

Since it started, more than 2.2 million high-quality books have been provided to Prep students and their families.

This term, a new system-wide Foundation Literacy Assessment will be available for optional use by schools.

It will help identify students who may be at risk of falling behind when they first start school.

And students will be further supported in learning to read with the full implementation of the Year 1 Phonics Check – mandated in Victorian government schools from this year.

Our record of change

Labor promised 100 new government schools. This week, that promise is delivered.

And we've helped ease the cost-of-living for families with children in school.

We deliver school breakfast clubs, glasses for kids, free dental checkups with Smile Squad, free swimming lessons, free public transport for kids, free pads and tampons, the camps, sports and excursions fund – and more.

Labor helps families save. Liberals just cut.

When they were last in government, the Liberals cut more than \$1 billion from education.

They cut funding for speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers in schools.

They even cut free fruit Fridays.

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Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“Free Prep bags are just one small thing we can do to help families and encourage a lifelong love of reading.”

“What’s the number one way to help families fight the cost of living? Investing in great, affordable, public services.”

“Labor invests, Liberals cut. In office, they cut \$1 billion from education. They even cut free fruit Fridays.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Ben Carroll

“These free Prep books and activities deliver practical cost-of-living relief that helps families from day one of school.”

“Reading is a great way to expand a child’s vocabulary and their understanding of the world while also spending valuable time together as a family.”

Quote attributable to Member for Sydenham Natalie Hutchins

“This is another great local school opening up in our growing suburb, giving families access to modern classrooms and facilities and a top-quality free education – and they deserve it.”