

Media Release

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Children
Minister for Disability



Friday, 3 April 2026

TRANSFORMING FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDER

Four-year-old kinder is changing – and for families in 12 more LGAs across Victoria, that change starts now.

Labor is transforming four-year-old kinder with more hours of play-based learning available.

After commencing the new program in six LGAs last year, Minister Blandthorn announced today that it's kicked off in an additional 12 LGAs across regional Victoria.

Children will still go to the same kinder they know and love, but with more hours – between 16-30 every week.

For some children this means double the amount of early education before they start school.

More than 130 funded kindergarten services now offer the expanded program, with more than 3,000 children set to benefit.

Families will save up to \$2,700 per child – money that stays in family budgets instead of going towards kinder fees.

The 12 new areas joining the rollout in 2026 with up to 20 hours of kinder are:

- Benalla Rural City
- Buloke Shire
- Corangamite Shire
- East Gippsland Shire
- Horsham Rural City
- Loddon Shire
- Mansfield Shire
- Mitchell Shire
- Pyrenees Shire
- Strathbogie Shire
- Wangaratta Rural City
- Wodonga Rural City

This builds on last year's rollout in Ararat, Gannawarra, Hindmarsh, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack – where more than 500 children are now receiving more kinder hours through Pre-Prep programs.

In addition to the expansion into 12 new LGAs, children from priority cohorts across Victoria are now eligible for the extra hours of learning.

This includes Aboriginal children, those from refugee backgrounds and children who have had contact with Child Protection.

Find out more about Free Kinder at vic.gov.au/free-kinder.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"This is four-year-old kinder made better – more hours, less fees and the same great educators families already trust."

"Every hour in Kinder is an investment in a child's future – and every dollar families save on fees is money back in the family budget."