

Best Start, Best Life Pre-Prep Roll-out Schedule

Information for families

Starting in 2025, Four-Year-Old Kindergarten will transition to 'Pre-Prep', increasing to a universal 30-hour a week program for four-year-old children across Victoria.

What are the Best Start, Best Life reforms?

Through its Best Start, Best Life reform, the Victorian Government is delivering an ambitious 10 -year overhaul of early childhood education to help children thrive, save families money and support parents, especially women, to return to work.

The Best Start, Best Life reforms include:

- Free Kinder programs for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services from the start of 2023
- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten transitioning to 'Pre-Prep' over the next decade, becoming a universal, 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria
- establishing 50 new government-owned and affordable early learning centres. These centres will be built in locations across Victoria that have the greatest need and will make it easier for families to access education and care.

These initiatives are on top of the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten reform, which will continue as planned, with no change to its roll-out schedule.

When can I access Pre-Prep for my child?

Pre-Prep will be rolled out in a staged approach based on your Local Government Area.

From 2025, delivery of between 16-30 hours per week of Pre-Prep will commence in Ararat Rural City, Gannawarra Shire, Hindmarsh Shire, Murrindindi Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, and Yarriambiack Shire.

More Local Government Areas (LGAs) will be added each year, with families in metropolitan Melbourne able to access Pre-Prep from 2030.

This staged roll-out is similar to the successful approach taken for Three--Year--Old Kindergarten and allows sufficient time to grow the workforce and infrastructure required to support this major uplift in service delivery.

The children who will benefit the most from increased access to early learning programs will be among the first to benefit from Pre-Prep.

Statewide eligibility from 2026 includes children who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, as well as vulnerable children who are from a refugee or asylum seeker background or who have had contact with Child Protection services.

Disadvantaged children who have (or have a parent or guardian who has) a Commonwealth concession card and those who are a multiple birth child (triplets or more) will also become eligible from 2028.

From 2032, Victorian children across the state will have access to 30 hours per week of Pre-Prep.

How will Pre-Prep help my child?

Pre-Prep will be delivered through sessional kindergartens and long-day-care centres, creating a high-quality, universal program that gives 4-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise and learn through play.

Pre-Prep will provide greater opportunities for children to develop the critical foundational skills for their learning and development in the year before school, especially for those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Studies show that developmentally appropriate 30-hour early learning programs can lead to improved learning and social outcomes.

Providing access to more high-quality early learning also supports parents, especially women, to re-join the workforce.

By 2032, all Victorian children will have access to 1,800 hours of funded kindergarten before school, comprising 600 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and 1,200 hours of Pre-Prep.

Why is Pre-Prep being rolled out in regional areas first?

Pre-Prep can be rolled out more quickly in rural and regional areas as they tend to have more available capacity in their early childhood services. These locations are also areas where children can sometimes have less access to educational opportunities.

The rural areas selected for early roll-out also have higher levels of disadvantage and vulnerability, and targeting these areas first means children who will benefit the most from increased access to early learning programs will be among the first to benefit from Pre-Prep.

Do we have enough space or workforce to deliver Pre-Prep?

The decade-long timeline of the Best Start, Best Life reform is intentional as it allows time to grow the required workforce, necessary infrastructure and consult meaningfully at every stage of the roll-out. The Department of Education will work closely with local governments, providers, schools and other services to increase facilities needed to deliver the program.

To support the roll-out of Pre-Prep, the Government will significantly expand its successful Kindergartens on School Sites program, which helps families avoid the double drop-off and supports children to transition successfully to school.

The Victorian Government is funding a wide range of workforce initiatives to increase the number of high-quality early childhood teachers and educators in the sector and ensure Victorian children get the best start in life.

More early childhood scholarships of between \$12,000 and \$34,000 will be available over the next four years, on top of the almost 1,000 scholarships already available to grow the early childhood teacher workforce. More than 3,000 scholarships to study early childhood teaching have already been awarded since October 2018.

Existing recruitment supports such as the dedicated Early Childhood Jobs site and funded recruitment agency assistance for priority services will continue to be provided as part of this Victorian Government investment, along with Free TAFE for early childhood educators.