

Media Release

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



Thursday, 21 November 2024

GIVING MORE CHILDREN ACCESS TO THE BEST START IN LIFE

The Allan Labor Government is supporting more children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to access and attend kindergarten, giving more Victorian kids the best start in life.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn today announced \$7.47 million in CALD Outreach Initiative grants for 25 councils, to help children from multicultural families across Victoria access and attend kindergarten.

Under the CALD Outreach Initiative, CALD teams employed by councils work directly with local families to support kindergarten enrolments, lead information sessions to build a better understanding of kindergarten, enable families and educators to maximise attendance and help families with the transition from kinder to school.

CALD outreach teams have helped more than 6,000 children with multicultural backgrounds enrol and attend kindergarten since the initiative started in 2021, across eight local councils.

Four councils – Alpine Shire Council, Ararat Rural City Council, City of Ballarat and Mitchell Shire Council – will be part of the Initiative for the first time thanks to an expansion of the program, alongside 21 councils across the state.

Under the expanded program, more children from multicultural backgrounds in more communities will now benefit from the Labor Government's \$14 billion *Best Start, Best Life* reforms.

The nation-leading reforms are transforming early childhood education to help children thrive, save families money, and support parents and carers to return to work or study if they choose.

The *2024-25 Victorian Budget* invests \$9.4 million over three years into the *Strengthening participation of CALD children in early childhood education* initiative.

Additional funding provided to the Municipal Association of Victoria, as part of the initiative, supports council-led outreach programs and activities, and shares key learnings and insights with all councils across the state.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Every parent wants to give their child the best start in life. We're delivering more support to families from multicultural backgrounds so more Victorian children can access Free Kinder and more parents have the freedom to go back to work if and when they choose."

"Our expansion of the CALD Outreach Initiative to an unprecedented 25 councils across the state will ensure kids in even more Victorian communities get the best start in life – which is exactly what they deserve."

Quote attributable to Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ingrid Stitt

"Young children have so much to gain and learn from the opportunities provided through kindergarten – we're making sure that every child, no matter their background, can have the very best start in life."

January 2025 to June 2027 CALD Outreach Initiative grant recipients are:

- Alpine Shire Council
- Ararat Rural City Council
- City of Ballarat
- Banyule City Council
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Brimbank City Council
- Casey City Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Darebin City Council
- City of Greater Geelong
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Hume City Council
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- City of Melbourne
- Melton City Council
- Merri-bek City Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- City of Whittlesea
- Wyndham City Council
- Yarra City Council
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council