

Media Release

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



Wednesday, 8 January 2025

MORE FUNDING TO SUPPORT SMALL REGIONAL KINDERS

The Allan Labor Government is helping busy families by securing the long-term future of small regional kindergartens, boosting funding for early learning facilities this year.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn today announced an increase to the annual baseline funding for rural sessional kindergarten services by including thousands of dollars in Free Kinder funding for the first time.

Based on expected enrolment numbers for 2025, more than 60 regional kindergartens will receive increased funding – delivering almost \$10 million in total for these services and making sure Victorians get the best education, close to home.

Eligible services will be funded the increased baseline equivalent to 18 enrolments, even if they have fewer children, from 1 January. Service providers will receive the first increased payment in Term 2 automatically, based on their reported enrolments for the year.

This means Victoria's smallest kindergartens will receive more than \$132,000 to help them continue to provide the best start to our smallest Victorians.

To be eligible, kindergartens must be the only kinder provider in their regional town or local area and have fewer than 18 enrolments. The approach simplifies kindergarten funding for service providers which can have higher operating costs because of their regional location.

This year the Labor Government's Free Kinder program will save families up to \$2,627 per child at sessional kindergartens and up to \$2,101 per child at long daycare centres.

The Labor Government is investing billions to build and expand hundreds of kindergartens across the state, supporting the delivery of 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten each week by 2029 and up to 30 hours of pre-prep each week by 2036.

Through our nation-leading *Best Start, Best Life* reforms, the Labor Government is transforming early childhood education to help children thrive, save families money, and support parents and carers to return to work or study.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Families in small towns deserve certainty when it comes to their children's education – we're making sure that no small kinder is left behind, giving our little learners the best start in life."

"Regional kindergartens play a pivotal role in their communities, and we're proud to support these services with more funding to help providers and local families."