

Media Release

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Children
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PRE-PREP ROLLOUT IS GIVING CHILDREN MORE TIME AT KINDER

The Allan Labor Government is improving education during some of the most crucial years of a child's life by giving more than 500 four-year-old kids extra time to learn before they start school – and helping parents return to work or study.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn and Member for Ripon Martha Haylett today celebrated the first term of increased hours in regional Victoria during a visit to Ararat Early Learning Centre, where experienced teachers are delivering 30 kinder hours each week to children enrolled in the four-year-old program.

Thanks to Free Kinder, Pre-Prep is free at participating kindergarten services. Children benefit from more time at kinder each week, learning through play, while families save thousands of dollars in fees.

Ararat Early Learning Centre is one of 37 services now providing more kinder hours in six regional areas this year, before the program expands across the state over coming years.

All kindergarten services in the local government areas of Ararat, Gannawarra, Hindmarsh, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack are delivering more kinder hours for four-year-olds, moving from a weekly 15-hour program to between 16 and 30 hours as part of Victoria's nation-leading education reforms.

Giving children more time to learn through play before starting school has many benefits and can improve their early literacy, numeracy and emotional development.

Children living in 12 more local government areas next year will have access to the extra hours as Pre-Prep expands next year – while Aboriginal children, kids from refugee backgrounds, and those who have had contact with Child Protection will also gain access to more four-year-old kindergarten hours, no matter where they live in the state.

By 2036, all children in a four-year-old program will have access to 30 hours of kindergarten each week. The phased approach allows time to grow the workforce and build the infrastructure required to support the services teaching the next generation.

Victorian children will have access to 1,800 hours of funded kindergarten before they start school once the rollout is finished, with 600 hours of three-year-old kindergarten and 1,200 hours of four-year-old kindergarten.

The Labor Government is investing billions to build and expand hundreds of kindergartens across the state. It's all part of our nation-leading \$14 billion *Best Start, Best Life* reforms, which are transforming early childhood education, saving families money and supporting parents and carers to return to work or study if they choose.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Delivering Pre-Prep is one of the main pillars of our nation-leading education reforms which brings better outcomes for children and gives parents some much-needed hours back to work or study – and best of all it's free through our Free Kinder program that saves mums and dads thousands per year."

"Pre-Prep gives children more time and opportunities to learn through play before school – equipping kids with better literacy, numeracy and emotional development."

Quote attributable to Member for Ripon Martha Haylett

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“Our early learning reforms are transforming education for our littlest Ararat locals, and now we’ve launched Pre-Prep to give 30 hours of free learning to four-year-olds.”