

**Best Start  
Best Life**

# Communications resource kit to promote 2026 registration and enrolment

For local councils offering Three-  
and Four-Year-Old  
Kindergarten, and Pre-Prep for  
priority cohort children



# Introduction

All Victorian children can now experience the benefits of 2 years of quality play-based learning. For some families, this includes Pre-Prep. It is important that families are supported to understand what their children can access and how they can register and enrol.

## *2026 snapshot*

- From 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, and children who have had contact with Child Protection have statewide access to Pre-Prep.
- Any child who was supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year is also eligible for Pre-Prep from 2026.
- A further 12 local government areas (LGAs) will start to deliver **Pre-Prep**, following a successful launch in 6 LGAs this year.
- **Three-Year-Old Kindergarten** will move another year closer to full implementation.
- **Free Kinder** continues.







# How to use this communications resource kit

This communications resource kit is for all local councils in Victoria, except those in 2025 and 2026 geographic Pre-Prep roll-out areas.

- This resource kit is intended to support local councils with the 2026 registration and enrolment period.
- The content can be used in council newsletters, websites and on social media. The kit may also help you respond to questions from families about the Best Start, Best Life reforms and Pre-Prep.
- It can be used by all local councils, including those that operate a Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) and those that do not.

# What this resource kit includes

 <b><u>Newsletter/website app article – pg. 5-8</u></b>	 <b><u>Social media content – pg. 9-13</u></b>	 <b><u>Key points – pg. 14-23</u></b>	 <b><u>Further resources – pg. 24-27</u></b>
<p>Edit and personalise these articles and include in your newsletter, website or online communication app</p>	<p>Adapt to suit your service and share posts on your social media channels, e.g. Facebook, Instagram</p>	<p>Share this information with families, either online or in conversations</p>	<p>Download digital materials and email to families, or print copies Order free printed materials to be delivered to you</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Template article text</li> <li>• Infographics about the benefits of 2 years of kinder and more hours you can include with article</li> <li>• Videos about kinder you can link to in articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample posts and tiles               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Register now for 2026</li> <li>- Kinder starts at 3</li> <li>- Free Kinder is back for 2026</li> <li>- Is your child eligible for Pre-Prep in 2026?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key messages               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free Kinder</li> <li>- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten</li> <li>- Pre-Prep</li> <li>- Early Start Kindergarten</li> <li>- Koorie Kids Shrine</li> <li>- Registration and enrolment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital and printed materials, including translated materials.</li> <li>• Websites</li> </ul>

# Newsletter/website article content

You can share the following article to promote 2026 registrations and enrolments.

Edit and personalise the article template with details about your local council.

The Key Points section of this pack has further messaging you can use in articles.

# Template article

*For use by all services in Victoria except 2025 and 2026 geographic Pre-Prep roll-out areas*

## Enrol your child in kinder for next year

It is time to enrol your children in kindergarten for 2026.

Services in **<insert council name>** will be offering up to 15 hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten each week, and 15 hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten each week.

Free Kinder will continue to be available at participating standalone kindergartens and long day care centres.

Pre-Prep will be available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background and children who have had contact with Child Protection across the state, including **<insert LGA>**. Any child who was supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year is also eligible for Pre-Prep from 2026. Pre-Prep hours will range from 16 to 25 hours each week for children who meet this eligibility criteria. Eligible families are encouraged to contact their local services or the council for more information.

It's strongly recommended children go to kindergarten for 2 years before starting school. Studies show this often leads to better development in language, pre-reading, early number concepts, independence and social skills.

Pre-Prep will start for all 4-year-olds in **<insert council name>** in **<insert year>**.

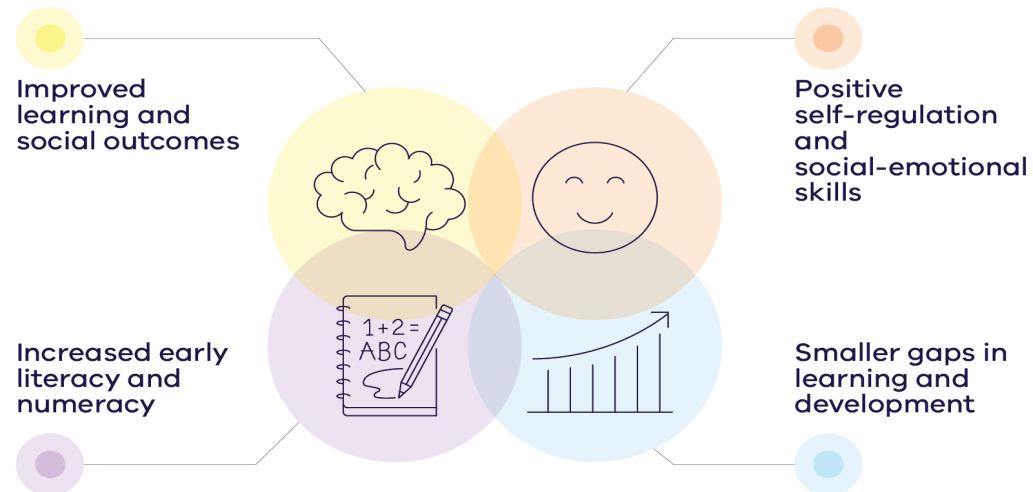
Contact your local services for more information about their 2026 programs and go to the **<insert council name and hyperlink>** website for more information about how to register and enrol.

You can also visit [vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder](https://vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder) for more information, including starting age. Registration for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten occurs the year before, often when your child is 2.



# Infographics you can use with articles

## More hours of play-based learning in Pre-Prep can lead to:



## In children's early years, play is the best way for them to learn and grow



### Physical play

builds confidence, patience, and perseverance



### Dramatic play

develops social skills and expressive language



### Sensory play

encourages children to experiment as they learn about weight, volume and gravity



### Nature/ outdoor play

helps children feel safe, strong and connected to the world



### Creative play

allows children to express themselves and develop their imagination

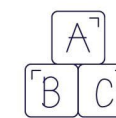
## Victorian early childhood programs are designed so children:



## Children who attend for 2 years have better development in:



Language



Pre-reading



Social skills

1 + 2 =

Early number concepts



Independence



Self regulation

# Videos you can link to in articles

Pre-Prep roll-out – 2025 and 2026

3YO Kinder –  
Celebration video

Make everyday a new  
adventure – experience  
a day in kinder

Beach Kinder



<https://vimeo.com/951361965>

<https://vimeo.com/962917021>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-VUErkm2wM>

<https://vimeo.com/1018173672>

# Social media content

You can share the following social media tiles and posts on your social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram etc) to promote 2026 enrolments.

# Social media content



## Register now for 2026

It's time to register to enrol in a kindergarten program for next year.

See our website or talk to your local service for more information on how to register to enrol, if you have any questions.

There is also a Starting Age calculator available at [vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder](https://vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder).

#kindervic #beststartbestlife #freekinder  
#kindertick

# Social media content



## Kinder starts at 3

Does your child turn 3 by 30 April next year? It's time to register them to enrol in a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program for 2026! Taking part in a quality kinder program can boost your child's development, wellbeing, and learning.

See our website or talk to your local service for more information on how to register to enrol in a 2026 kindergarten program, or visit [vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder).

#kindervic #beststartbestlife #freekinder  
#kindertick

# Social media content

## Free Kinder: Enrol for 2026



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### Free Kinder is back for 2026

Participating services in **<local council>** are proud to offer Free Kinder again in 2026.

Free Kinder helps all Victorian children access 2 years of quality kindergarten before starting school.

Free Kinder is for everyone – you don't need to be a permanent resident or Australian citizen to access it.

See our website or talk to your local service for more information on how to register to enrol in a 2026 kindergarten program, or visit [vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder).

#kindervic #beststartbestlife #freekinder  
#kindertick

# Social media content

**More hours,  
more learning,  
more play**



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## Is your child eligible for Pre-Prep in 2026?

Pre-Prep starts next year across Victoria for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from a refugee or asylum seeker background, children who have had contact with Child Protection, or any child accessing Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in 2025.

Services in **<local council>** will be offering Pre-Prep to eligible children from next year.

Use the Pre-Prep calculator at [vic.gov.au/preprep](https://vic.gov.au/preprep) to see if your child is eligible.

#kindervic #beststartbestlife #freetick  
#kindertick

# Key points

You can use the information on the following pages in your online communications (e.g. articles, website, emails) or to assist your conversations with families and your community.

- **Free interpreting services**

Remember, if your local council delivers a Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme and/or a program to support kindergarten and Pre-Prep access and participation such as the CALD Outreach Initiative, you are also eligible to access free interpreting services.

- **Additional resources for families listed in Kindergarten Sector Guide**

If parents and carers in your community are seeking more information or want to know about support available for their child to access and participate in programs, you can also provide them with information from the Kindergarten Sector Guide. This guide has key information about the Best Start, Best Life reforms and the support available for children to access and participate in kindergarten programs

# Free Kinder

- Free Kinder is available at participating services for Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, and Pre-Prep in 2026.
- Free Kinder is for everyone – you don't need to be a permanent resident or Australian citizen to access a free kindergarten program.
- Free Kinder can only be accessed at one service at a time.
- Families with children enrolled in a participating standalone (sessional) kinder receive a free program.
- Families with children enrolled in a participating long day care receive a fee offset.
  - If families are eligible for the Commonwealth Childcare Subsidy (CCS), this will be applied first and then the Free Kinder offset. This means families only need to pay the remaining amount after CCS and the Free Kinder offset have been applied.
- Services offering Free Kinder receive funding directly from the Victorian Government. This means families don't have to claim the savings back.



# Three-Year-Old Kindergarten

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours will vary from service to service, providing families with between 5 and 15 hours per week.
- Starting a quality kindergarten program at an earlier age leads to positive effects on child development. Kindergarten is a safe place for children to build skills, become more independent, and make friends.
- Use the Starting Age Calculator on the [Department of Education's website](#) to enter your child's birth date to find out what year they can start.



# Pre-Prep

- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten is becoming Pre-Prep, with programs increasing from 15 to 30 hours each week by full roll-out.
- Pre-Prep offers a longer program in the year before school, which means there will be more time for children to deepen their learning and development.
- Pre-Prep is a play-based learning program led by qualified teachers. Like Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, Pre-Prep will follow the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.
- For more information about or to use the Pre-Prep calculator to find out when a child is eligible, go to [vic.gov.au/pre-prep](https://vic.gov.au/pre-prep).

# Pre-Prep – 2026 priority cohort roll-out

- From 2026, between 16 and 25 hours of Pre-Prep will be available statewide to:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
  - children from a refugee or asylum seeker background
  - children who have had contact with Child Protection services
  - children supported by Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning in their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year.
- Children who are currently accessing Early Start Kindergarten at services in 2025 are eligible for Pre-Prep from 2026.
- While all children stand to benefit from the Best Start, Best Life reforms, those who meet the eligibility for the priority cohort roll-out are children that research suggests have the most to gain from expanded programs.



# Early Start Kindergarten

- Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) continues to be available for eligible 3-year-old children, providing 15 hours of kindergarten each week.
- To be eligible for ESK, children must be aged 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten, and either:
  - identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
  - be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or
  - be from a family that has had contact with Child Protection.
- ESK eligible children can access a 3-year-old group, 4-year-old group, a mixed-age group, or a combination of groups to achieve 15 hours per week.
- It is important that services enrol eligible children in ESK, even if Free Kinder or funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is available. This ensures children have priority of access, and services can receive additional funding and support.
- Children who are eligible or have access to ESK in 2025 will be able to access Pre-Prep in 2026.

# Koorie Kids Shrine

- Koorie Kids Shine celebrates culture and promotes the benefits of kindergarten for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 3 and 4 can access 15 hours of free kindergarten each week through Early Start Kindergarten.
- Kindergartens work hard to create culturally safe places for Koorie children and families and include Aboriginal perspectives in the learning curriculum and environment.
- At kinder, Koorie kids will learn the skills they need that will help them do well in future years at school, including:
  - build their sense of identity
  - explore how they fit into the world around them
  - learn how to communicate with others
  - strengthen their physical, social and emotional wellbeing
  - feel confident in learning and trying new things.



# Registration and enrolment

*For councils that operate a CRES*

- Use the [Find a Kinder Program](#) map to find kinder programs that are funded by the Victorian Government in locations near you, including contact details as well as if it is a sessional (standalone) or long day care service.
- A number of services in our local council are also a part of a Central Registration and Enrolment System (CRES). This system makes registering your child easy and fair. You can use one form to register your interest in several kindergarten programs.
- Registrations for 2026 will open on **<insert date>**. Register by **<insert date>** for a first round offer – you can continue to register after this date, but registering for a first round offer gives you the best chance of getting a place in your preferred kinder program.
- You can contact us for support with the registration and enrolment process. You will need to prepare documents such as child's birth certificate, immunisation statement, healthcare card, proof of residence (e.g., utilities bill).
- We will send you updates by **<email and/or text message>** when your child is offered a kindergarten place. We will also advise how many weeks you have to respond to your offer – if you are unhappy with this offer, you can reject it and ask for another offer in the next round.

**Note** - Additional guidance and support for local councils to expand and enhance their Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme (CRES) service can be found on the [Department of Education's CRES webpage](#).

# Registration and enrolment ... continued

*For councils that operate a CRES*

- Once you accept your place the kindergarten service will help you enrol your child and prepare you for day one. You will also be contacted for additional information about your child, such as dietary requirements, medical conditions etc.
- The Department of Education works closely with kindergarten providers, including local councils, to understand demand and support access to programs in the local area. This includes applying the Priority of Access (PoA) criteria appropriately when allocating kindergarten places.
- **[Delete if not applicable to your council]** Following the application of the department's Priority of Access policy, **<insert council>** also prioritises applications in line with our local criteria at **<link>**. You can contact our CRES team at **<insert email>** or **<insert phone number>** for more information.
- **[Delete if not applicable to your council]** Note that you will also need to re-register for enrolment for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep the following year. Enrolment in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten does not guarantee a place at the same service for your child's second year of kindergarten.
- Further information can be found on the Department of Education's website.



# Registration and enrolment ... continued

*For councils that **do not** operate a CRES*

- Use the [Find a Kinder Program](#) map to find kinder programs that have been approved by the Victorian Government in locations near you, including contact details as well as if it is a sessional (standalone) kindergarten or long day care service.
- You can contact the service directly using the contact details found on the Find a Kinder Program website and inquire about enrolment.
- The Department of Education works closely with kindergarten providers, including local councils, to understand demand and support access to programs in the local area. This includes applying the [Priority of Access \(PoA\)](#) criteria appropriately when allocating kindergarten places.
- This criteria applies to funded kindergarten places only and supports families to access a kindergarten program that is most suitable for them. This is particularly important for children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage who may face additional barriers.
- Service providers are required to notify all families of the priority of access policy that applies when they enrol their child. Service providers may also have their own criteria for allocating places.
- Note that you may need to re-enrol for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten or Pre-Prep the following year, and that enrolment in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten does not guarantee a place at the same service for your child's second year of kindergarten. Please confirm this with your service when enrolling your child in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten.
- Further information can be found on the [Department of Education's website](#).



Further resources

# Further resources – digital and printed materials

There is a Marketing Toolkit for services to promote 2026 enrolments that includes brochures, posters, postcards, fact sheets and social media tiles you can download and distribute.

You can also access digital materials, including posters and postcards, social media tiles, infographics and email signatures at [vic.gov.au/communicating-about-kinder-to-your-community](https://vic.gov.au/communicating-about-kinder-to-your-community). See examples below. There are communication packs on this webpage with information and sample text to promote Free Kinder.



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**Know someone  
with a  
2-year-old?**


Three-Year-Old Kinder is available across Victoria. Ask your kinder service about Free Kinder.

Go to [vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder) to find out more.

For translated information:



**THE EDUCATION STATE** **VICTORIA** **KINDERGARTEN**



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**KINDERGARTEN**

**Play-based learning and your child**

Young children are naturally motivated to play. Research shows that in children's early years, play is also the best way for them to learn and grow.

**What is play-based learning?**

Play-based learning supports children to explore and make sense of themselves and their world. It builds on children's natural curiosity. Through hands-on exploration of the world around them, children learn in many ways. For example, playing with sand helps children learn about mathematical ideas, such as weight and volume, and sharing with dolls and dress-up helps children learn about families and how to relate to others.

The approach to early childhood education supports children to learn and extend their development through activities and experiences that they find enjoyable and meaningful. Programs that help children to learn through play are supported by educators who will provide children opportunities for:

- **adult-led learning** where the educator plans or introduces a new experience, idea or topic to deliberately direct the child's learning
- **child-directed play and learning** where the child leads their learning through exploration, imagination and experimentation
- **guided play and learning** where educators involve themselves in children's spontaneous play and extend their learning as opportunities arise

**Why is play-based learning important?**

Play-based learning is now widely understood to be one of the most important ways to support children to develop the skills and understanding they need to live well now and into the future. There is strong evidence that the pathways in children's brains are positively influenced by the exploration that happens during play.

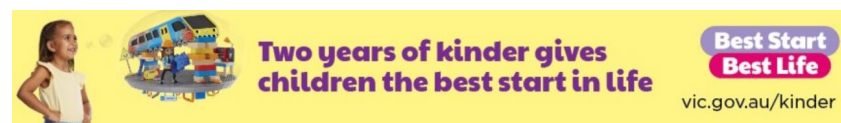
Play supports children in all areas of their development, including their understanding of themselves and relationships with others, their connection to the communities they live in, how they communicate effectively with others and how they think about and solve problems.

Positive attitudes towards learning, such as persistence, curiosity and imagination are all developed during play. These attitudes set children up for a life-long love of learning.

**Consider some of the ideas below:**

- at both times, introduce science and maths concepts such as floating, sinking, heavy, full, empty, half, and so on, using a simple container in the water
- when hanging out the washing, ask your child to hand you one, two, three pegs, sort pegs by colour, or talk about bigger, longer, smaller, and so on using clothes
- at mealtimes, describe ingredients, flavours, colours, textures to introduce new words and concepts, such as where the ingredients came from
- when reading books, use the pictures to prompt further conversation or explain the text
- when driving or walking, describe what you are seeing, ask open questions.

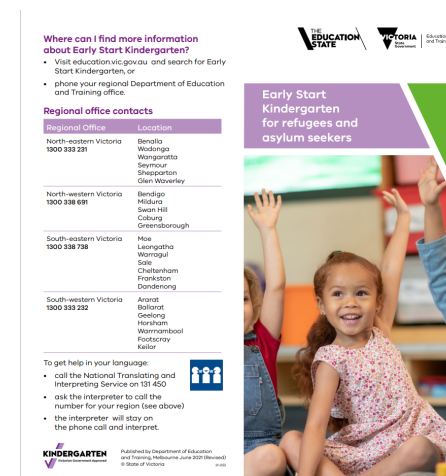
**THE EDUCATION STATE** **VICTORIA** **KINDERGARTEN**



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**Two years of kinder gives children the best start in life**

[vic.gov.au/kinder](https://vic.gov.au/kinder)



**Where can I find more information about Early Start Kindergarten?**

- Visit [education.vic.gov.au](https://education.vic.gov.au) and search for Early Start Kindergarten, or
- phone your regional Department of Education and Training office.

**Regional office contacts**

Regional Office	Location
North-eastern Victoria 1300 333 231	Benalla Wodonga Warragul Shepparton Geelong Glen Waverley
North-western Victoria 1300 338 891	Bendigo Hillston Swan Hill Colong Geelong
South-eastern Victoria 1300 338 781	Moe Leongatha Warragul Sale Chesham Frankston Dandenong
South-western Victoria 1300 333 232	Ararat Ballarat Geelong Hornsea Melton Footscray Kallista

To get help in your language:

- call the National Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450
- ask the interpreter to call the number for your region (see above)
- the interpreter will stay on the phone call and interpret.

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**Why is kindergarten important?**

Kindergarten helps prepare children for success at school and in life. At kindergarten, children use play to learn about language, numbers and patterns. They also learn how to get along with others, share, listen and manage their emotions. Teachers help children become curious, creative, and confident about learning. Research shows that two years of kindergarten are better than one.

**What is Early Start Kindergarten?**

Early Start Kindergarten gives three-year-old children from a refugee or asylum seeker background 15 hours per week of free or low-cost kindergarten.

Applications for Early Start Kindergarten are made by the kindergarten. The Early Start Kindergarten grant is paid directly to the kindergarten.

**Is my child eligible?**

Your child is eligible if you or your child:

- have a refugee or humanitarian visa, or
- are applying for a refugee or humanitarian visa, or
- have a current or expired ImmiCard.

If none of these apply but you or your child have been a refugee or asylum seeker, or had similar experiences, your child may still be eligible. Contact your local Department of Education and Training office to ask about an exemption. You can also ask any professional who supports you to contact the Department for you.

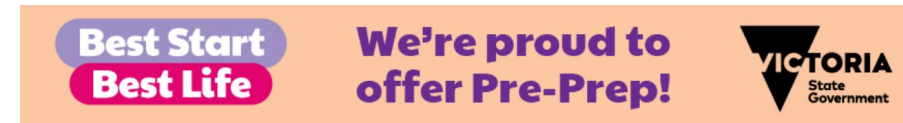
**How do I enrol my child?**

Early Start Kindergarten is available in all kindergarten programs with a qualified teacher. You can enrol your child by contacting a kindergarten near you or your council. Tell the kindergarten if you need an interpreter. If you need help to enrol, ask the Department of Education and Training, or any professional who supports you, such as:

- support worker
- bicultural worker
- maternal and child health nurse
- supported playgroup facilitator.

**Should my child go to four-year-old kindergarten?**

Yes. After Early Start Kindergarten, your child is eligible for free or low cost four-year-old kindergarten. This will help them to keep building on their strengths.



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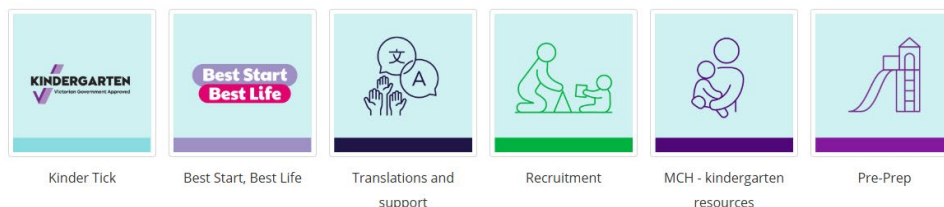
**We're proud to offer Pre-Prep!**

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# Further resources – digital and printed materials

Order printed information from the **Victorian Kindergarten Resources Portal** – you can order materials related to the Best Start, Best Life reforms, Pre-Prep, Early Start Kindergarten, Koorie Kids Shine, Kinder Tick, and translated resources to help you promote your kindergarten program. These materials are paid for by the department and printed and delivered to your service.



## Further resources – websites

- [vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder](https://www.vic.gov.au/sending-child-kinder) for information about Free Kinder, the benefits of kinder, and how to find and enrol in a kinder program. The 'Quick guide for parents' and 'Starting age' calculator are also available from this webpage.
- [vic.gov.au/preprep](https://www.vic.gov.au/preprep) for information about Pre-Prep, and the full roll-out schedule for priority groups and geographic locations. There is also a Pre-Prep calculator so you can see when children can access programs.
- [vic.gov.au/kinder/translations](https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder/translations) for information about kindergarten in 30 languages.
- [vic.gov.au/evidence-behind-2-years-kindergarten](https://www.vic.gov.au/evidence-behind-2-years-kindergarten) for information about the evidence behind 2 years of kindergarten. The 'Two years of early childhood education – what the evidence says' fact sheet is available from this webpage.
- [vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms](https://www.vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-reforms) for information about what's changing in early childhood education and when.
- [vic.gov.au/supporting-cald-families-engage-kindergarten](https://www.vic.gov.au/supporting-cald-families-engage-kindergarten) for resources to support communication with culturally and linguistically diverse families about kindergarten. Information about the CALD Outreach Initiative is available from this webpage.
- [vic.gov.au/use-interpreter-early-childhood-education-services](https://www.vic.gov.au/use-interpreter-early-childhood-education-services) for information about Early Childhood Language Services. Local councils that receive funding from the department to deliver a CRES and/or a program to support access and participation (including the CALD Outreach Initiative) can access interpreting services.

*If you have further questions, or you wish to provide feedback on this communications kit, please contact [bsbl.change.management@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bsbl.change.management@education.vic.gov.au)*

