

Directory of programs and supports

New or expanded initiatives

Attraction initiatives

Initiative	Description
Encouraging people to choose careers in early childhood education	
Best Start, Best Life communications campaign	An integrated advertising campaign to attract people to the early childhood sector by raising awareness of career opportunities and the support available to study and join or re-join the sector.
Improving the accessibility and quality of pre-service training	
Early Childhood Scholarships	Scholarships of up to \$25,000 are encouraging and supporting people to study to become early childhood teachers, with up to \$34,000 available for Aboriginal people to study through the Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathway Scholarships. Since 2018, more than 2,400 scholarships have been awarded under the program.
Innovative Initial Teacher Education	<p>Early childhood educators with an approved Diploma-level qualification are able to apply to complete a bachelor's degree through a compressed program of study at Deakin University, while continuing to work in their early childhood service. Students are eligible for an enhanced scholarship and receive extra supports, including mentorship and time release for study.</p> <p>In 2022, the Innovative Initial Teacher Education (IITE) program will be expanded to additional ITE providers. It will also include the Early Childhood Professional Practice Partnerships (ECPPP). This is aimed at supporting the provision of high-quality student placements in early childhood services, promoting early childhood careers to dual qualified students, and providing continued professional learning and research opportunities. The ECPPP builds on formal partnerships between kindergarten service providers and Victorian universities to support leading practice and quality in initial teacher education.</p>
Free TAFE	In 2020, the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, were added to the Free TAFE course list to strengthen the educator pipeline. More than 3,100 students commenced these courses in 2020 and 2,300 in the first nine months of 2021.
Better quality placement experiences and vocational education and training	
Early Childhood VET placement pilot	A pilot project at Swinburne University is trialling a new placement model for the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, in partnership with the early childhood sector. The model has been designed and is well received by the sector partners and students. The model integrates theory and practice in a way that enhances quality and the experience of placement for both the sector and students.
Enhancing VET learning materials	The Victorian Government is funding the development of a suite of high-quality early childhood teaching and learning materials to support the delivery of the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. The resources are aligned with the new training package to boost the quality of VET training and provide better learning and assessment resources to teachers.

Attraction initiatives

Initiative	Description
Support for early childhood educator traineeships	A partnership between the Department and Jobs Victoria will fund \$2.2 million to provide 150 new traineeships for priority jobseekers, across the state, to commence in early 2022. Priority job seekers will undertake a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care while being paid to work in an early childhood service and receive wrap-around supports.
Getting people in jobs – when and where we need them	
Early Childhood Teacher Incentives program	<p>There are two types of financial incentives available to support early childhood services to recruit qualified early childhood teachers.</p> <p>Location incentives of between \$9,000 and \$50,000 are available for early childhood teachers to take up a teaching position in selected hard-to-staff services delivering Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. These incentives are available in services across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria.</p> <p>A new Individual Incentive of \$9,000 is available for qualified early childhood teachers not currently working in the Victorian early childhood sector to take up a position at any service that is planning to deliver a funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program in 2022. Ten hours of coaching will be available to support these early childhood teachers who re-join the workforce.</p> <p>Successful job applicants who meet the criteria for both incentives will be able to receive both types of payments. Anyone receiving an incentive, and who is moving more than 200 kilometres to take up a role, is also eligible for relocation support.</p>
Early Childhood Jobs website	Early Childhood Jobs is a new, free online platform for early childhood professionals to find roles at kindergarten services across Victoria. The website supports service providers with their recruitment and makes it easier for prospective teachers and educators to find jobs that suit their work preferences.
Recruitment supports	<p>A new recruitment kit has been developed for employers with tips and strategies to attract candidates to vacancies, including sample written content that employers can tailor for their recruitment needs.</p> <p>A panel of specialist recruitment agencies is also working with the Department to support services and providers to employ new teachers in hard-to-staff areas. The recruitment agencies will also focus on seeking suitably qualified candidates from across Australia and New Zealand to help build the supply of kindergarten teachers in Victoria.</p>

Retention initiatives

Initiative	Description
Supports for early career teachers	
Grants to support provisionally registered teachers	Grants to services of up to \$2,872 per provisionally registered early childhood teacher have been established to support their progression to full teacher registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. So far, more than 1,000 grants have been awarded. The grants can be used flexibly by services, including to cover the cost of professional learning for the provisionally registered teacher, or to employ staff to backfill positions to allow mentors and provisional teachers the time they need to work through the process together.
Mentor support	The Effective Mentoring Program provides two days of professional learning throughout the year to train experienced teachers to become mentors.
Career supports for teachers in their first five years of teaching	<p>A range of free, evidence-informed professional learning and support programs are available to develop the resilience, capability and confidence of early childhood teachers who are in their first five years of their career. This includes a minimum five hours of individual coaching for all first-year early childhood teachers, communities of practice for second and third-year teachers and an alumni network to help these teachers stay connected and share their professional growth and expertise.</p> <p>Over 100 first-year teachers have commenced working with a coach in 2021, and 14 Communities of Practice have been established online, connecting second and third-year ECTs across the state.</p> <p>Early Childhood Beginning Teacher Conferences are being delivered annually and provide early childhood teachers with strategies to develop their practice and create meaningful relationships with children, families, peers and other professionals.</p> <p>Grants from \$5,000 to \$30,000 are being provided through the new Early Career Teacher Retention Innovation Grants to encourage service providers to develop innovative place-based solutions for improving early career early childhood teacher retention in their organisations.</p>
Staff wellbeing support	
Wellbeing webinars and research to better understand wellbeing	<p>The Department, in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, has provided three webinars and supporting resources focused on educator wellbeing. This series explored the evidence behind positive psychology and its impacts on educator wellbeing. The webinars and resources are available on-demand at: Mental health and wellbeing in early childhood Coronavirus Victoria.</p> <p>Early Childhood Australia, on behalf of the Department, is undertaking a rapid resilience and wellbeing research project to better understand educator wellbeing and resilience, and strategies that educators use to maintain career purpose and fulfilment. This includes an anonymised survey and follow up interviews. Key results of the survey and follow up discussions are anticipated to be published on the Department's website by the end of 2021.</p>
Wellbeing Support Program	The Department is funding the development of a Wellbeing Support Program to be available to staff employed at kindergarten services that are respondent to the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) 2020.
Targeted professional development for service leaders	The Department is supporting early childhood service leaders to increase their awareness of their roles and responsibilities as an employer for protecting and promoting mental health and wellbeing, including obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. Following consultation with WorkSafe, the Department is developing free targeted training including an online webinar and interactive online resources and support for early childhood service leaders with delivery commencing from Term 4, 2021.

Retention initiatives

Initiative	Description
Leadership and career development	
Early Years Learning Networks	From the beginning of 2021, Early Years Learning Networks are bringing together early childhood teachers and educational leaders to collectively share, reflect and deepen understanding of effective, evidence-based practices. A contribution to backfill is provided where needed to support educators to attend the Networks.
Early Learning Leadership Forums	The leadership forums bring together early childhood leaders to strengthen communication, consultation, co-design and leadership skills across the sector. Local and international early childhood experts, as well as local service champions have presented at the Forums and workshop groups have enabled collaboration and ensured local context is reflected in discussion between leaders.
Victorian Early Years Awards	The annual Victorian Early Years Awards celebrate early childhood leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation in improving outcomes for children and their families. Winners in each category receive a grant of up to \$15,000 to support their nominated activity or individual professional development. The finalists and winners in each category are also eligible to win the prestigious Minister's Award, selected by the Minister for Early Childhood.
Educational Leader professional learning	In 2021, the Department is funding a tailored Victorian cohort of Early Childhood Australia's Leadership Program for 220 Victorian Educational Leaders. This renowned leadership program is a strengths-based, self-directed, six-month program for early childhood leaders.
Career longevity support	The Department, in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, recently ran two new free webinars on career longevity for Victorian kindergarten teachers and educators. The webinars delve into recent research on professionalism, leadership and career longevity in the early childhood sector, as well as profiling practical strategies that maintain and build careers in early childhood education and care. Videos of the webinars will be published on the Department's website shortly.
Supporting workforce planning and management	The Department, in partnership with Early Learning Association Australia, has developed a free Employee Management and Development resource and supporting online training modules that are available to all service leaders and people managers in the early childhood sector. These supports provide early childhood people managers with the tools to implement a best practice approach to the ongoing management and development of all employees that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of their service.

Quality initiatives

Initiative	Description
School Readiness Funding	School Readiness Funding (SRF) provides funding to services for programs and supports, which build the capacity of the workforce and benefit children, particularly children more likely to experience educational disadvantage. In 2021, SRF reached over 82,500 children in approximately 2,600 kindergarten services, including all those run by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
Early Childhood Improvement Branches	The 17 Early Childhood Improvement Branches (ECIBs) bring together staff with specialist early childhood expertise to work with early childhood staff, services, providers, local councils and the community. The aim is to provide practical, local support to implement early childhood reforms and improve quality. These staff also play a critical role in supporting workforce attraction, recruitment and retention, in partnership with local providers and stakeholders.
Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program	<p>The Kindergarten Quality Improvement Program (KQIP) is a professional development program that provides intensive, targeted support to early childhood services with identified quality improvement needs. It aims to lift the quality of participating services to improve outcomes for children to continue their learning and development into school. The program includes a range of resources, including personalised mentoring by external early childhood professionals.</p> <p>Since 2018, approximately 375 unique services have been or are being supported to improve their quality through the KQIP.</p> <p>In June 2021, an expansion of the KQIP commenced and offers access to an additional 360 services over the next three years.</p>
Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool	<p>This online, observation-based Tool is designed to be used by early childhood teachers and their co-educators to support best assessment for learning practice aligned to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). It will build the capacity of teachers and educators to understand and respond to children's strengths, interests and abilities through an ongoing cycle of observation, analysis, planning, implementation and reflection. The information generated by the Tool will also help early childhood teachers to share information with their school colleagues to support children's transition to school.</p> <p>In 2021 the Tool is being piloted and evaluated in around 50 kindergarten services.</p>
Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit	The Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit is designed to help services in their first year providing funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. It supports early childhood teaching teams to deliver high-quality educational programs aligned to the VEYLDF and appropriate to the learning and development needs of three-year-olds. The Toolkit includes a box of educational resources (including tip sheets, posters, books and online learning vouchers), a two-day professional learning program and website content.
Online professional learning	<p>The Department continues to provide a range of free online professional development to early childhood teachers and educators to support implementation of the VEYLDF and high-quality practice, in response to emerging sector needs. In 2021, this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a series of four webinars and a facilitated community of practice on guiding children's behaviour • a series of webinars on connecting assessment to practice • professional learning on writing Transition Learning and Development Statements • an Outdoor Pedagogy Portal for Victorian Educators that includes a professional learning module, online books and case studies on maximising outdoor learning