



Best Start
Best Life

Support for the Victorian early childhood workforce

Acknowledgment of Country

The department proudly acknowledges Victoria’s First Nations communities as the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands, waters and skies, and pay respect to all Elders past and present.

We recognise First Nations people as Victoria’s first educators, artists and scientists, and we value the ongoing contribution of First Nations people and communities to Victorian life and how this enriches us all.

We also commit to work together to deliver the Victorian Government’s commitment to self-determination, Truth and Treaty.

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The Victorian Department of Education (the department) offers a variety of programs to support early childhood teachers (ECTs), educators and service leaders. This guide is designed to help early childhood professionals navigate these supports.

Each of the supports managed by the department aligns with the 6 areas for action identified in the *Best Start, Best Life Workforce Strategy: Continuing to value and grow the kindergarten workforce* which was developed following the extensive Best Start, Best Life consultation process.

To learn more about the department's commitment to support the delivery of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and the transition to Pre-Prep, visit vic.gov.au/best-start-best-life-workforce-strategy

Initiatives led by the Australian Government Department of Education, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Beyond Blue are also included to provide a high-level overview of the broader range of supports available.

Accessing support

Links to the supports for the Victorian early childhood workforce outlined in this brochure are available via this QR code



Supports for early career ECTs and educators

The transition from studying to securing a role and becoming proficient on the job is a critical time for teachers and educators to consolidate their professional identity and practice. It can be a challenging period and involves significant dedication from new graduates and those that support them.

Expanding the supply of new graduates needs to be matched with support for early career professionals in the workforce, which is why the department continues to invest in mentoring support, grants and professional development to assist early career ECTs to progress to full teacher registration.



Beginning Teacher Conferences

These fully funded 1-day conferences offer a valuable opportunity for networking and professional development to ECTs in their first year of teaching, Diploma-qualified educators receiving coaching support through the End-to-End Career Supports Program and early childhood teaching students that are already working in a funded kindergarten service and will graduate in the next 12 months.

The conferences are held throughout the year, both virtually and in person, and cover a broad range of topics, including how best to support children with additional needs and how to support your wellbeing as you begin your teaching career.

To find out more and register visit:
vic.gov.au/supports-early-career-early-childhood-professionals



End-to-End Career Supports Program

The End-to-End Career Supports Program is for ECTs and Diploma-qualified educators and includes:


- fully funded, individualised one-on-one coaching for those in their first 2 years of practice
- Communities of Practice for those in the 2nd to 5th years of their careers
- an Alumni Conference for those that participated in the coaching, Communities of Practice and/or Beginning Teacher Conferences.


The program provides opportunities to develop your practical knowledge, explore areas of interest and connect with peers. It also recognises the significant growth, and important milestones early childhood professionals accomplish during their initial years in the sector.

To find out more visit:
vic.gov.au/supports-early-career-early-childhood-professionals

Legend

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—qualified educator

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 Early Childhood
Teacher

 Service Leader/
Educational Leader



Case Study

Sujata Dalvi

Sujata Dalvi is in her second year as an early childhood teacher (ECT), after being supported with a scholarship from the Department of Education to complete a teaching degree.

During her studies, Sujata would often access resources on the department's website.

“

The resources guided me and provided me with the tools to improve my teaching practices as a student teacher and in curriculum planning.”

She feels lucky to have been employed by Springvale Service for Children at Alfred Street Early Learning Centre soon after her graduation and explained how she continues to use the resources to guide her practice:

“

The kindergarten I work at has families from multicultural backgrounds...including several migrant families...hence I continue to make extensive use of the website, particularly to acquire information about ... different approaches to providing an inclusive program.”

The department's programs have also been beneficial to Sujata during her initial years as an ECT. She has attended a Beginning Teacher Conference that focused on supporting children with additional needs, and participated in Community of Practice sessions and received coaching through the End to End Career Supports Program.

“

All these opportunities have been useful in different ways. These programs have made me think deeply about my teaching practices, the quality of education I provide as a graduate teacher, how to ensure all children participate to their fullest capacity and have taught me how to find external help/support when I need it.”

Sujata “would highly recommend these programs to all early career ECTs and educators” and looks forward to continuing to enjoy opportunities to connect with her peers and develop her skills throughout her career.



▲ Provisionally Registered Teacher (PRT) Grants Program

Provides additional funding to approved providers to assist them to support early childhood provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) to move to full registration with the VIT.

To find out more and register visit:
vic.gov.au/early-childhood-provisionally-registered-teacher-prt-grants-program

▲ Help to find a mentor

If you are a PRT unable to find an appropriate mentor, a list of helpful suggestions is available, along with a 'Mentor Map' showing the locations of trained mentors across Victoria that may be able to support you through your VIT inquiry process.

To find out more visit:
vic.gov.au/how-find-early-childhood-education-mentor

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Early Childhood Provisionally Registered Teacher (PRT) Mentor Program

Delivered in partnership with Gowrie Victoria, this program provides free mentor support during specific intake periods each year to PRTs unable to find an appropriate mentor. Priority access is given to PRTs located regionally that have been provisionally registered for more than 2 years.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/how-find-early-childhood-education-mentor

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PRT Seminars

To assist PRTs to understand the process of moving to full teacher registration, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) host a range of PRT seminars.

To find out more and register visit:

vit.vic.edu.au/news/events

Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships

Tailored courses that offer a range of financial and non-financial supports are available for new students and educators looking to become an ECT in 2025 through the Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships program. You can choose from a range of vocational and university courses that offer opportunities to study online or locally. This includes courses especially designed for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/early-childhood-tertiary-partnerships-program



Follow this QR code to hear from early childhood professionals that studied with VICSEG New Futures through the Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships program.

Supports for experienced ECTs and educators

Through the Best Start, Best Life consultation process, the department heard that access to professional learning and opportunities to network and share knowledge with other teachers and educators is highly valued, but it can be difficult to find the time or the backfill.

Well-targeted career supports, wellbeing initiatives and professional development opportunities support the delivery of quality kindergarten programs, bolster confidence and job satisfaction and contribute to retention. The department is committed to working with the sector to provide these supports for the workforce as it grows and assist services to implement local solutions to improve retention.



Effective Mentoring Program

Professional learning is available for experienced teachers that want to enhance their mentoring skills to specifically support graduate and returning teachers progress from provisional to full teacher registration with the VIT.

To find out more and register visit:

vic.gov.au/effective-mentoring-program



Coach and Mentor Training Program

This program assists experienced teachers and educators to develop their coaching and mentoring skills through a series of face-to-face workshops and online modules.

To find out more and register visit:

vic.gov.au/coach-and-mentor-training



Early Years Learning Networks

All ECTs and Educational Leaders working in funded Victorian kindergarten programs are invited to attend their local network meeting each term. Networks meetings are collaborative and focus on professional practice.

To find out more and register visit:

vic.gov.au/early-years-learning-networks-early-childhood-teachers




Mentors of Pre-Service Teachers Program


Experienced teachers are often called upon to mentor pre-service teachers during their placements. The VIT run a professional learning seminar to support those new to mentoring pre-service teachers and to enhance the skills of experienced mentors.


To find out more and register visit:


vit.vic.edu.au/news/events

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Museums Victoria Professional Learning

These free programs, offered by Museums Victoria in partnership with the department, are designed to build educator and ECT capacity in delivering kindergarten programs that align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and incorporate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

To find out more and register visit:

museumsvictoria.com.au/learning/early-childhood-education/professional-learning-for-early-childhood-teachers



Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit

The toolkit was designed to help teams deliver high-quality educational programs that align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and meet the learning and development needs of children participating in funded

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs, in both single and multi-aged groups. Exemplar videos, reflective questions and helpful links and resources are included in the toolkit to support the delivery of high quality Three-Year-Old Kindergarten in Victoria.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/three-year-old-kindergarten-teaching-toolkit



Be You educator wellbeing program from Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue's Be You program recognises that ECT and educator wellbeing is at the heart of caring for children and has close links to children's wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The program provides ECTs and educators with easy access to useful resources to support their wellbeing, such as the Be You educator wellbeing guide, fact sheets, planning tools and videos. Each resource was designed to help individuals and learning communities build and maintain educator wellbeing.

To find out more visit:

beyou.edu.au/resources/educator-wellbeing



Coaching for Returning Teachers and Educators Program

A free coaching service available for experienced teachers and educators returning to or joining the Victorian early childhood education sector.

The wraparound support includes up to 20 hours of individualised coaching, delivered flexibly with face-to-face and online coaching sessions.

To find out more and register visit:

gowrievictoria.org.au/coaching-for-returning-teachers-and-educators

Supports for Leaders

Both new and experienced early childhood professionals need to be able to trust the capability of the leadership of their service in facilitating their work in educating young children and building relationships with families.

Effective leaders are central to building quality kindergarten programs, supporting teachers and educators, and improving services. This is why the department continues to work in partnership with the sector to lift leadership capabilities, facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practice, and to plan ahead.

▲ Early Learning Leadership Forums

Early Learning Leadership Forums are delivered twice a year in each of the department's 17 learning areas. These forums bring together early childhood leaders to network and connect, engage with the department, and build shared understanding of early childhood reforms.

To find out more and register visit:
vic.gov.au/leading-impact-events-early-childhood-leaders

▲ Best Start, Best Life Evening Leadership Series

The Best Start, Best Life Evening Leadership Series are hybrid events designed to provide up to date information and insights on the Victorian early childhood sector reforms.

They feature a fresh, accessible program delivered by highly regarded guest speakers, including leaders in early childhood education, researchers and leadership experts.

To find out more and register visit:
vic.gov.au/leading-impact-events-early-childhood-leaders

▲ Victorian Educational Leadership Program (VELP)

Professional learning is available for new and experienced Educational Leaders to develop their pedagogical leadership and change management skills to support the delivery of high-quality kindergarten programs.

To find out more and register visit:
research.qut.edu.au/childandfamily/velp/

▲ Capability Assessment Guide

This guide is designed to support the teachers and approved providers undertaking the Capability Assessment process, specified in the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement 2020 (VECTEA) and the Early Education Employees Agreement 2020 (EEEA), to facilitate eligible early childhood teachers to move from Level 2.5 to Level 3.1.

To find out more visit:
education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/professionals/profdev/VECTEA-EEEA-Capability-Assessment-Guide.pdf

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Case Study

Rachael McBrien

Fawkner Kindergarten Director and Educational Leader Rachael McBrien applied to take part in the Victorian Educational Leadership Program (VELP) in October 2023, hoping it would address her need for deeper professional development and would provide a sense of challenge.

Having been a teacher for 29 years, Rachael was hoping to strengthen her abilities as a pedagogical leader, admitting that the word 'pedagogy' was one which mystified her.

“Pedagogy can be so broad in early childhood,” she said. “I wanted to confidently be a pedagogical leader as part of my educational leader role.”

Taking part in VELP prompted Rachael to reflect on her leadership style. It gave her new tools to use in her role and developed her ability to source and use professional readings and resources, as well as offering a valuable opportunity to meet other leaders in the early childhood sector.

Through VELP, Rachael developed an action-research project focused on embedding First Nations' perspectives in kindergarten programs across her centre.

“I am hoping that participation from educators will promote working as a team and give educators the confidence to embed First Nations' perspectives and knowledges,” she shared.

After completing the program, Rachael said she felt 'energised' and is confident her improved leadership skills will have a flow-on effect to her team and the children and families in her centre.

For other Victorians who may be considering applying, her advice is “be brave and step outside your comfort zone.”



Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool (EYALT)

The EYALT is an online, observation-based assessment to help Victorian ECTs and educators support the learning and development of children in Three and Four-Year-Old kindergarten programs. It was developed by the department to support best practice in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYDLF) Practice Principle: Assessment for Learning and Development.

How the EYALT works

The EYALT contains 8 modules aligned with the VEYDLF and the Victorian Curriculum. Each module focuses on different aspects of a child's development.

In each module, educators respond to a series of questions which draw on the child's existing knowledge. When modules have been completed, the EYALT can:

- generate a Learning Report showcasing the child's strengths and interests
- help educators plan what the child should learn about next and appropriate teaching strategies
- provide key information for a child's transitional learning and development statement.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/early-years-assessment-and-learning-tool



Change Management Toolkit and Retention Guide

Provides key information and tools to help service leaders work with their teams and families to plan and implement Pre-Prep and continue Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. It includes practical 'how to' information and examples about making program changes, such as using rotational models, multi-age groups, team teaching and teaching longer days.

The Early Childhood Workforce Retention Guide, included in the toolkit, highlights effective service-level strategies and practices to support workforce wellbeing and improve the retention of staff.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/expanding-your-early-childhood-education-programs-change-management-toolkit

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Financial supports available



Early Childhood Scholarship Program

Scholarships of up to \$25,000 (before tax) are available for eligible people who are commencing study or are already studying an approved course to become a qualified ECT. This includes educators who are looking to upskill.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood



Financial incentives available to support ECTs and educators

Financial incentives of between \$9,000 and \$50,000 are available for eligible ECTs and educators joining (and re-joining) the Victorian early childhood sector or taking up roles at priority services, such as those in hard-to-staff locations.

Relocation supplements are also available for eligible ECTs and educators moving more than 100km to take up their role.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood#teacher-incentives



Certificate III Upskill Support Program (CUSP)

Financial support of up to \$7,000 (before tax) is available to eligible educators who hold a current Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and wish to upskill to a Diploma of ECEC. Funds can be used to contribute towards cost-of-living expenses while working and studying.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood



Case Study

Sahay Moo Soe

Follow this QR code to meet Sahay, a scholarship recipient and ECT





Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathways Scholarships Program

Funding is available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to become an ECT or educator, including those looking to upskill and those already studying. Eligible recipients could receive up to \$34,000 (before tax) towards an approved early childhood teaching qualification.

To find out more visit:

vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood

Case Study

Charley Bunting

Charley Bunting, an Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathways Scholarships Program scholarship recipient, describes her experience with this program below, and shares why becoming an ECT means so much to her:

“

For several years now, I have worked in the early childhood education and care sector. I started my career as a Certificate III educator and progressively have worked my way up to being a Bachelor qualified early childhood teacher.

As a Gunditjmara/Wemba Wemba woman, I believe that it is important that First Nations people can see each other in learning spaces and learn from each other.

“

The Aboriginal pathway scholarship helped me achieve success in completing my studies and becoming a teacher, through enabling me to undertake hundreds of hours of unpaid placements and buy resources relevant to my studies. Now I am fulfilling my goal of being an early childhood teacher and supporting children to have the best start to their education.”

Charley is pictured here at her graduation ceremony after completing her degree.





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Professional development and paid practicum subsidies

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers can apply for a subsidy from the Australian Government to help qualified staff complete training that adds to their skills or a subsidy to support ECTs and educators in training complete the practicum components of their degree.

Eligibility criteria, key dates and further information can be found via the following links to the Australian Government Department of Education’s webpage:

education.gov.au/early-childhood/workforce/support/professional-development-opportunities/paid-practicum-subsidy

education.gov.au/early-childhood/workforce/support/professional-development-opportunities/professional-development-subsidy

Coming in 2025


The department is developing professional learning programs for all early childhood teachers and educators, particularly those in their early career, on the following topics:


- intentional teaching
- team teaching
- disability and inclusion.


The department will also release the following in 2025:


- an updated Three-Year Old Kindergarten Teaching Toolkit
- Resources and e-modules to support those involved in the induction and onboarding of staff.

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Accessing support

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Staying up to date

If you would like to be one of the first to know about programs being offered, grant rounds and other important information, sign up to receive the department's Early Childhood Update newsletter monthly. Subscribe here:

vic.gov.au/early-childhood-update

