

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten ELAA Statewide Forum 25 March 2022



Education
and Training

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: Progress to date

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten has been rolled out successfully across the state.
- It was successful thanks to the sector and the strong partnerships between providers, peak bodies, local government and the Department.
- In 2022, **tens of thousands of children** are accessing a Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program, with more than **2,700 services** offering funded kindergarten programs across the state.
- More than **2,500 scholarships** have been awarded to help people on their path towards becoming an early childhood teacher.
- Since 2019, more than **40 kindergartens** have been built, expanded or upgraded with Victorian Government support and **12 kindergartens built on or next to school sites** to further support this reform. Over **80 additional infrastructure projects** have also been funded and are being implemented across the State.
- Services have undertaken extensive change management work, often with the support of regional Departmental staff.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: 2023 policy and funding guidance



Next phase in the roll-out of Three-Year Old Kindergarten

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is an ambitious reform, designed to be implemented in stages. The full ten-year roll-out is needed to complete the reform across the state.
- The state-wide introduction of flexible hours from 2023 is the next stage in the roll out of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. This approach has already been introduced in early roll-out areas.
- Flexible hours will allow providers to determine how many hours between five and 15 per week of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten they offer, within set parameters.
- The state-wide introduction of flexible hours will:
 - maximise children's access to Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs
 - provide children with more hours of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs where this is possible, which will have a greater impact on children's learning and development
 - allow providers to be more responsive to the varied needs of communities across the state
 - create more certainty to support long-term infrastructure planning and service viability.



Why maximising participation is so important

- Three-Year-Old Kindergarten is fundamentally about equity. The reform is supported by research that shows the development of children is best supported by attending two years of kindergarten.
- The primary goal for 2023 service delivery is to provide access to funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten to as many children as possible.
- For this reason, increasing the number of hours offered in a three-year-old program should not lead to reduced numbers of children participating in two years of funded kindergarten programs.
- The expected scale up of hours over time is deliberately designed to support services to optimise their hours as infrastructure and workforce capacity in the system continues to grow.



A focus on participation and continuing to work together

- The Department will work with providers to ensure that children's overall participation is prioritised over an increase in program hours, where there is a trade-off between the two.
- Providers should not increase their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours beyond what was offered in 2022, if this results in the number of 2023 three- or four-year-old kindergarten enrolments offered across the service being lower than the number of enrolments in 2022.
- Many services will not be affected by this requirement.
- Where services are impacted, exceptions can be granted subject to sufficient capacity to accommodate children being available in 2023 at other local services and reliable workforce options are in place.
- If providers are interested in this, they should discuss it with their local Early Childhood Improvement Branch.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten Flexible Funding

Will increasing the number of hours per week for my service's three-year-old program/s hours lead to fewer three-year-old or four-year-old places being offered at my service?

Yes

Option 1

Reduce the number of hours in your planned three-year-old program/s, so that the number of three and four-year-old places offered is equal to or more than the number of enrolments in 2022.

Option 2

Make modelling adjustments (e.g. rotational model, increase days of operation, different group sizes, longer day sessions) to maintain or increase enrolments in your three-year-old and four-year-old groups.

Option 3

Seek an exception from your local Early Childhood Improvement Branch.

This may be granted if there is sufficient capacity to accommodate children at other local services and your service has a reliable workforce option to deliver the planned programs.

No

Your service can proceed as planned.





CASE STUDY ONE

Kookaburra Kindergarten

Situation: the service plans to increase its Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program from five hours in 2022 to 10 hours in 2023. The current teacher is able to increase his hours to deliver the longer Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours.

Impact: the service expects a small increase in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolments and no change to its Four-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolment compared to 2022 levels.

Action: the service puts the arrangements in place and works with the local council to confirm its programs on the Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme.

Outcome: in 2023, the services increases enrolments and receives additional funding from the Department due to those increased enrolments and program hours.



CASE STUDY TWO

Golden Eucalyptus Kindergarten

Situation: Golden Eucalyptus Kindergarten is a committee of management two-room sessional kindergarten service. It is planning to increase its Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program hours to 7.5 hours per week in 2023.

Impact: As initially planned, this programming change results in an overall reduction of 10 places across the Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs at the service.

Action: Golden Eucalyptus Kindergarten contacts the local Early Childhood Improvement Branch. The ECIB works with the service on various modelling solutions and identifies that, by introducing a different model, the service could increase to 7.5 hours for the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program without a reduction in places offered.

Outcome: Golden Eucalyptus Kindergarten maintains 2022 enrolments levels in 2023, increases program hours, and receives increased funding from the Department.



CASE STUDY THREE

Apples Kindergarten

Situation: Apples Kindergarten is a single-room community-run sessional kindergarten. The service director and the Committee of Management have decided to increase the 3YO program from five hours in 2022 to 15 hours in 2023. The current Three-Year-Old Kindergarten teacher is able to increase her hours to deliver the program.

Impact: The change in programming results in an overall reduction in nine places being offered across the Three- and Four-Year-Old Kindergarten programs in 2023.

Action: Apples Kindergarten applies for an exemption on the basis that there are no capacity issues in the local government area and they have a reliable workforce option to deliver the increased hours.

Outcome: The exception is approved by the Department of Education and Training and Kookaburra Kindergarten's 15-hour Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program is funded.



CASE STUDY FOUR

Love 4 Learning Kindergarten

Situation: Love 4 Learning Kindergarten is a not-for-profit single-room kindergarten. The kindergarten is seeking to increase their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program to 15 hours in an area where there are known capacity issues.

Impact: As the service is already operating long days with group sizes at its licensed capacity, increasing the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program to 15 hours will reduce the number of places offered.

Action: After deeming that no remodelling options to increase capacity are viable, the service decide to proceed with the increase in hours to the Three-Year-Old Kindergarten program, despite capacity constraints in the area.

Outcome: The service is assessed under the exceptions framework and a decision is made that they are not able to increase their hours to 15 at the service.

Three-Year-Old Kindergarten: Funding as usual



Priority of Access criteria

- Funded kindergarten services must use the Priority of Access (PoA) criteria to prioritise specified children where there is a higher demand than places available.
- This helps to ensure that children who are experiencing vulnerability, disadvantage or who have a disability are supported to access a kindergarten program that best meets their needs.
- To ensure equity for both three and four-year-old children with the introduction of Three-Year-Old Kindergarten, the PoA criteria requires:
 - Services with separate three and four-year-old groups to apply the PoA policy to each age group separately, and in mixed-age groups, equally prioritise three and four-year-old children who the PoA policy applies to.
 - As outlined above, children who are eligible for ESK continue to have PoA to a place in a 15 hour-a-week kindergarten program, regardless of how many hours of a funded Three-Year-Old program are being offered.
 - You should continue to prioritise access to children residing in your local government area (LGA) before considering applications from families outside your LGA.



Minimum age of attendance

- In line with the school starting age, some children will be two years old when their Three-Year-Old Kindergarten year starts.
- Under the National Quality Framework, the minimum educator to child ratio for children under three is 1:4. For children over three years of age the ratio is 1:11.
- When staffing does not cover the required ratios for children under three years old, these three-year-old children will not be able to attend.
- For children who are not yet three years old, services must waive parent fees for this period, and when they attend at three years old the Department will provide a full year of child-level funding.



Second year of funded kindergarten

- Currently, children in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten program who have developmental delays in two or more key areas of development and would benefit from a second year of kindergarten will be eligible to access a second year of funded kindergarten following an assessment by an early childhood teacher.
- All children in Three-Year-Old Kindergarten will be expected to transition to Four-Year-Old kindergarten in the following year.
- A funded second year of kindergarten will only be available for children in the Four-Year-Old program who meet the above criteria.



Kindergarten funding

Funding for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten matches the rates of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

This includes:

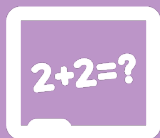
- Per capita
- Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- Ratio supplement

Services delivering fewer than 15 hours will be funded for the hours they operate. The kindergarten fee subsidy will continue to be a part of all funded kindergarten programs for three and four-year-olds.

The eligibility criteria will be the same as the current funded kindergarten programs as provided in the [kindergarten funding guide](#)

Rural Funding

All rural services will receive base funding if their combined three and four-year-old enrolments are below the equivalent of 18 enrolments for the full 15 hours per week.



School Readiness Funding and EYM Funding

School Readiness Funding

- SRF will continue to be applied to funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten programs. Estimated Three-Year-Old Kindergarten enrolments have been included in 2022 SRF allocations and you will be informed later this year of your SRF allocations for 2023.

EYM Funding

- Eligible Early Years Management (EYM) organisations will receive a further \$72 per three-year-old enrolment in EYM-managed sessional kindergarten services to help with the additional costs involved in delivering high-quality kindergarten programs for three-year-old children.
- The per enrolment funding amount does not change based on the number of hours the kindergarten program is operating.



Early Start Kindergarten

- Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) will continue to provide 15 hours a week of funded kindergarten for all eligible children until 2029. This includes children:
 - who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 - are from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds
 - or those known to Child Protection.
- It is important that service providers ensure children eligible for ESK are enrolled for the full 15 hours of funded kindergarten. Children accessing ESK can be enrolled in a three-year-old group, a four-year-old group, a mixed-age group, or a combination of groups to access 15 hours of kindergarten.
- ESK can be accessed in kindergarten programs in any setting, including long day care. Services will receive the maximum available funding, including School Readiness Funding.
- Service providers are expected to continue to provide the full 15 hours funded through ESK even where three-year-old groups are being offered fewer than 15 hours.

Any questions?

Thank you

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