Ben Carroll & Labor

18 November 2026

John Cherry
Head of Advocacy
Goodstart Early Learning
advocacy@goodstart.org.au

Dear Mr Cherry,

Labor is the party of free kinder.

To date, more than 570,000 children have benefited from the program, saving families more than $5,400 per child per year.

Free Kinder supports every child to have the best start in life.

We are proud to have invested $14 billion to roll out our Best Start, Best Life reforms.

If re-elected, we will continue. Our agenda includes:

- Free Kinder for three and four-year-old children
- 15 hours of funded Three-Year-Old Kinder by 2029
- 30 hours of funded Four-Year-Old Kinder by 2036
- building 50 Early Learning Victoria centres
- building, expanding and improving kinders across Victoria
- investing in workforce supports for early childhood teachers and educators

Our reforms

Two years of quality early childhood education is better than one and has been demonstrated to improve outcomes across all learning domains, particularly for children experiencing disadvantage.

As part of the roll out of this nation-leading reform, children across the state will be eligible to access 15 hours of play-based learning each week by 2029, enabling more children to benefit from two years of play-based learning before starting school.

As a result of our reforms, Victoria now leads the nation on three-year-old enrolments. A greater proportion of three-year-olds are attending kinder in Victoria than any other state or territory.

Labor is reforming Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, making additional hours of funded kindergarten available for children across the state. The rollout is happening in stages, with children in 18 local government areas already eligible for between 16-30 hours a week.

Next year, children in a further 12 LGAs will be eligible to access additional hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten. By 2036, every child will be eligible for 30-hours of Four-Year-Old Kindergarten.

Fighting *for* working people.

Victorian Labor

Authorised by Steve Staikos, Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch), 438 Docklands Drive, Docklands.

Ben Carroll & Labor

School Readiness Funding

School Readiness Funding supports three and four-year-old children in all early childhood education and care services that are delivering funded kindergarten programs in Victoria.

Labor has delivered this funding to address educational disadvantage through building the capacity of both educators and families to respond to children's learning and development across communication, wellbeing, and access, inclusion and participation.

The amount of School Readiness Funding each service receives in a two-year planning cycle is based on the level of need of the children enrolled at their service.

Funding is between $2,000 for services with lower levels of need and/or smaller enrolment numbers to more than $400,000 for services with higher levels of need and large enrolments.

Labor has delivered School Readiness Funding to support the learning and development of all children, with a particular focus on addressing social and educational disadvantage.

Kinder workforce

As part of the roll out of the Best Start, Best Life reforms, we have invested more than $370 million to grow and support the kinder workforce. We have delivered:

- scholarships of up to $25,000 for Victorians studying to become an early childhood teacher
- up to $7,000 for educators to upskill from a Certificate III to a Diploma qualification

We have also partnered with tertiary providers, and we continue to deliver a range of free career supports including mentoring and professional development.

Kinder buildings

Since coming to government, we have allocated $3.8 billion in early childhood infrastructure (including almost $500 million in the 2026/27 Budget) to build, expand and upgrade kindergartens right across the state.

It's at risk under the Liberals and One Nation

A Liberal-One Nation Coalition Government has promised to make $40 billion in cuts.

That puts Free Kinder, kinder funding and support for educators at risk.

Yours Sincerely,

Steve Staikos
State Secretary

Fighting *for* working people.

Victorian Labor

Authorised by Steve Staikos, Australian Labor Party (Victorian Branch), 438 Docklands Drive, Docklands