



‘Free Kinder’ funding at Lady Forster Kindergarten in 2023



What is 'Free Kinder'

The *Best Start, Best Life* reform being implemented by the State Government of Victoria will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care.

A critical part of the reform is *Free Kinder*, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children by making this free.

Free Kinder will be available for both 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs

Introduction

Every eligible early childhood service in Victoria has been provided with the option to 'opt in' to Government funding for the provision of 'Free Kinder' to families.

Lady Forster has 'opted in' for 2023 to this funding regime, to ensure its programs are inclusive and fees are no barrier to families for their child to attend kindergarten.

The benefits of your child attending two years of kindergarten are outlined further below.

How does 'Free Kinder' work in 2023?

Instead of families paying fees to the kindergarten, DET will pay the kindergarten direct via its funding systems.

What does this mean for my child's program?

The Government will fund up to 15 hours of kindergarten for each child for the two years prior to school.

1. Three and Four-Year-Old Sessional Kindergarten programs

The 3YO program is 6 hours per week and the 4YO program is 15 hours per week.

- No (\$0) term fees will be charged throughout 2023 for either program.
- Enrolment fee (\$100) will be refunded if already paid.
- Excursion fees for any additional (unplanned) event may be charged.
- LFK merchandise/clothing is not part of term fees.
- No Working Bee fees will be charged.
- Donations to the kindergarten are permitted.

2. Extended Hours Kindergarten program

This 4YO program comprises 15 hrs per week of kindergarten program with the remaining hours each week provided as 'wrap around care'

A weekly fee will be charged for the program which may be reduced by any Child Care Subsidy a child is eligible for.

Under the 'Free Kinder' regime, families of a child in this program will receive this funding via a \$2,000 credit for the year, representing the '15-hour kindergarten' part of the weekly program.

The funding guidelines require the \$2,000 in funding to be spread over the 2023 year hence each family will receive a \$200 credit on their family account each month for ten months. This will commence with the first credit applied on 1 February 2023 and continue monthly until the final credit is applied on 1 November 2023.

Child Care Subsidy will apply to the full weekly fee charges on the account (not the residual amount owing after credits are applied) ensuring eligible families receive the full benefit of any Child Care Subsidy funding.

As per the Sessional Kindergarten Programs:

- Enrolment fee (\$100) will be refunded if already paid.
- Excursion fees for any additional (unplanned) event may be charged.
- LFK merchandise/clothing is not part of term fees.
- No Working Bee fees will be charged.
- Donations to the kindergarten are permitted.

3. Friday Care Program and Holiday Program

As these are not kindergarten programs, they are not eligible for 'Free Kinder' funding in 2023 and daily fees for these two programs are as follows:

- Half Day (7.30 – 1.00 pm) = \$70 per day
- Full Day (7.30 – 6.00 pm) = \$90 per day

These fees are reduced by any Child Care Subsidy a child is eligible for.

A child can only be enrolled in one funded program

Families can only access one funded kindergarten program per child, per year.

Please be mindful of this if you combine an enrolment at Lady Forster Kindergarten and wish to 'top up' your child's weekly hours at another early childhood service.

All families sign a declaration when enrolling their child at Lady Forster Kindergarten that they are accessing their funded program at our service only.

You are able to access other programs/child-care whilst your child is enrolled at Lady Forster Kindergarten but you need confirmation from the other service that they are not intending to claim funding for your child's enrolment.

LADY FORSTER KINDERGARTEN

SCHEDULE OF FEES 2023

PROGRAM	DAY & TIME	HOURS PER WEEK	FEES
3-Year-Old Sessional	Mon & Wed 9am-12pm	6 hours	Free Kinder (No Fee)
4-Year-Old Sessional	Mon 12.45-3.45 pm Tue & Thur 9am-3pm	15 hours	Free Kinder (No Fee)
* Extended Hours Kindergarten (Core Hours)	Mon to Fri 9am-3pm	Maximum 30 hours	\$385/week + Free Kinder \$2,000 credit
* Extended Hours Kindergarten (Full Time)	Mon to Fri 7.30am-6pm	Maximum 52.5 hours	\$435/week + Free Kinder \$2,000 credit
* Friday Care	Fri only 7.30am-6pm	Maximum 10.5 hours/week	\$70/half day \$90/full day

OTHER FEES

Enrolment Fee

No enrolment fee is charged under the 'Free Kinder' funding.
(Any enrolment fee already paid will be refunded for 2023 families)

Late Pick-Up Fee

\$6 per minute after 6pm. (All Programs).

*Holiday Program

\$70 per half day. \$90 per full day.

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**Families enrolled in these programs may be eligible to pay reduced fees through the Government Child Care Subsidy Package.*

What are the benefits of two years of kindergarten?

Kindergarten programs are an important step for children – it's strongly recommended you send your children for two years of early learning before they start school.

Ninety per cent of a child's brain develops by the time they turn five. This means the benefits of enrolling children in kindergarten can last into the school years and beyond.

*In 2023, children can access between **five and 15 hours a week** of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten. Victoria is the only state or territory to fund two years of kindergarten programs before school.*

Having an additional year of play-based learning can be transformative for children and set them up for success. Studies show that students who went to kindergarten for at least two years had better development in language, pre-reading, and early number concepts.¹

Between the ages of three and five, children also learn important social and emotional skills, such as how to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Kindergarten is a safe place for children to build these skills as well as their independence and concentration while forming positive relationships and making friends.

When children start at age three rather than four, kindergarten programs can have more of an impact. The benefits are even greater for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

¹ *Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project, Department for Education, United Kingdom [check italics here]*