

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood, Working Age and Indigenous Participation

DEEWR Question No. EW0208_14

Senator Cash asked on 5 June 2013, Hansard page 49

Question

Early Years Quality Fund - correspondence with United Voice

Senator CASH: In relation to the evidence received about the behaviour of the TWU, has any instruction been given to the union that it should desist from advising employees above this? Senator BILYK: I do not think the TWU covers childcare workers. Senator CASH: United Voice. Mr De Silva: I wrote to United Voice; I am not sure of the date. Senator CASH: Recently; in May, in April? Mr De Silva: I will double-check—I think it was in April—to advise that some issues had been raised with our department. I said the frequently asked questions had been updated and that any information regarding the fund would be based on what is on the DEEWR website. Senator CASH: That was to United Voice? Mr De Silva: Yes. Senator CASH: In terms of eligibility and money being paid to the centres, is that per the evidence you gave to Senator Xenophon? Ms Taylor: Yes. Senator CASH: From what date would you expect centres to be receiving the money? Ms Taylor: That will depend on how quickly the guidelines can be settled and made publicly available and then an assessment process can be started and undertaken. We would expect, because this is a budget measure that starts from 1 July, this in the coming financial year. I am hopeful that very quickly after that time we would be in a position to have the process up and running. Senator CASH: But there is no actual date that anybody is working towards at this stage? Ms Taylor: The funding becomes available on 1 July. Senator CASH: I assume there has to be an application process after that time. Ms Taylor: Yes, that is right. The guidelines have to be settled. They need to go through the appropriate processes for Commonwealth grant guidelines. They then have to be published and then applications can open. Senator CASH: There is a process to go through, but the funding is available from 1 July? Ms Taylor: Yes. Senator CASH: Mr De Silva, are you able to table for the committee the letter that you sent to United Voice, so we can be assured that the concerns that have been raised have been addressed by the department? Mr De Silva: Yes.

Answer

The Department wrote to Ms Louise Tarrant, National Secretary of United Voice, on 11 April 2013. A copy of the letter is attached.



Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Ms Louise Tarrant
National Secretary
United Voice
303 Cleveland Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

Dear Ms Tarrant

I am writing in relation to the \$300 million Early Years Quality Fund which the Australian Government announced on 19 March 2013 to support quality outcomes for children by assisting early childhood services to attract and retain qualified educators.

As you know, the Australian Government is also establishing an Early Years Quality Fund Advisory Board to assist in the implementation of the Fund. The Board will consist of representatives from employer and employee organisations, the early childhood sector and officers from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). A key role of the Advisory Board will be to provide advice on eligibility and assessment criteria to access the Fund.

Over the last two weeks, the DEEWR Hotline and the MyChild website has received a number of queries or representations from providers and educators regarding whether eligibility criteria or assessment criteria for the Fund have been determined. We have advised them that as the Advisory Board is yet to be established, other than what was provided on the DEEWR website at the time of the announcement, eligibility or assessment criteria for the Fund have not been agreed.

A number of the queries claimed that a representative from United Voice had advised them that access to grants under the Fund will only be provided to services with a majority of employees who are members of United Voice. Similarly, that if a majority of employees were members of United Voice that this would be taken to demonstrate commitment at the service to quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework.

We have not investigated the veracity of each of these claims, but to ensure that the sector has accurate information regarding eligibility to, and assessment under the Fund, DEEWR recently updated the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding these issues. For your convenience, I have attached a copy of the FAQs as at 10 April 2013.

I would appreciate it if you would forward the FAQs to United Voice officials and delegates to ensure that everyone has the same information.

50 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra ACT 2601
GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601 | Phone (02) 6121 6000
www.deewr.gov.au | ABN 63 578 775 294

The Department will also be circulating written advice to all Long Day Care Services about the Fund and providing a direct link to the FAQs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D De Silva', with a horizontal line under the last name.

David De Silva
Group Manager
Early Childhood Initiatives

" April 2013