

**Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education**

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

**Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Child Care**

**Department of Education Question No. ED0304\_14**

**Senator Lines provided in writing.**

**Question**

***Early Years Quality Fund***

1. The department has indicated that some services that have signed a contract for Early years Quality Fund money have chosen to keep the funding for wages, as originally designed, and will not be utilising the funds for professional development as the government is pushing them to do. Will the department provide a new schedule of wages for the services that have decided to keep the money for wages? How will the department confirm how these wages will be paid? 2. For those services that have chosen to use the funds for both wages and professional development. Can the department provide information on how those services will split that money and how professional wages will be paid? Will there be a separate schedule of wages? What will the restrictions on spending be for those services that choose to use some funds for professional development? How will the funds be acquitted? 3. What are the extra costs involved in re-issuing contracts under the Early Years Quality Fund? 4. Has the department allocated funding for increased spending on legal fees as a result of forcing services to re-write contracts? 5. How much money is being allocated to the Professional Development Fund? Has any money been paid out yet? Who will receive funding? 6. How will the fund be administered? How will professional development be defined? What activities will qualify for funding? What are the guidelines? When will they be available? 7. When will funding be available? How will educators and providers access the funding? 8. What mechanisms will be in place to ensure this money goes towards professional development rather than general provider expenditure? 9. I have received information from a child care provider in Queensland that the online professional learning program that has been provided by Early Childhood Australia will cease due to being de-funded. Is this true? When was this announcement made? How much funding is being withdrawn? 10. Why has the government de-funded this program?

**Answer**

1. For those services that have decided to use the money for wages, the department will use the existing wages schedule. The department will monitor compliance with funding agreements through the reporting and acquittal processes.
2. The decision regarding the proportion to be spent on wages is a matter for the service.

As at 26 February 2014, variations with providers had not been finalised and, as such, details of the proportion to be spent on wages cannot be provided.

For those providers that choose to spend a proportion on wages, the existing wages schedule from the original funding agreement will be used.

For those providers that choose to spend a proportion on professional development, the funding agreements will set out how funds may be used for professional development, for example, for course fees, reasonable travel costs to attend courses or other training, backfilling employees on courses or training, and the cost of staff and other resources directly related to the provision of professional development to their employees.

Services will be required to acquit the funding by providing audited acquittal statements that cover all expenditure of funding during the relevant period and that are verified by an auditor or chartered accountant.

3. There are no extra costs to the department for making variations to funding agreements.
4. Providers have been offered a variation to their funding agreement. No additional funding has been allocated for departmental work associated with variations to funding agreements.

5, 6, 7 and 8.

Guidelines for the new professional development programme are being finalised and, as such, the department is unable to advise on final eligibility, total programme funding, administration of funding, the definition of professional development, activities that will qualify for funding, or acquittal processes for grant funding.

Timing for the release of the guidelines and the opening of the application process is a matter for Government.

9 and 10.

The Australian Government has not defunded the National Quality Standard Professional Learning Programme (NQS PLP). The previous government funded Early Childhood Australia to assist with the transition of the sector to the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Framework. The contract was for a finite period and expires on 30 June 2014.

The professional development resources funded under the NQS PLP will remain available.