

**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. EW0060_14

Senator Boyce provided in writing.

Question

**2011 Productivity Commission report - Early Childhood Development
Workforce**

1. In the 2011 the Productivity Commission report Early Childhood Development Workforce, one of their key recommendations was: "In implementing the National Quality Standard, governments should ensure adequate resourcing for regulators to enable appropriate training of their staff in the new regulatory arrangements and their effective implementation." What exactly has the Department done to respond to that?

2. That same report also found that: "To ensure that children with additional needs benefit fully from the COAG ECEC reforms, governments should: • modify the structure and operation of inclusion programs and • reassess funding levels so that such programs: • provide sufficient funding and support to enable the inclusion of all children with additional needs • cover the full cost of employing inclusion support workers at market wages • Provide funding for an inclusion support worker to enable children with high support needs to attend preschool for 15 hours per week in the year before school." • provide multiple-year funding, requiring re-application or adjustment only where there is a significant change in the level of need of a particular child or cohort of children.

What's happened to make these things happen?

3. Recommendation 8.2 of that report said; "To provide inclusion support staff with the necessary skills to ensure children with additional needs benefit fully from the COAG ECEC reforms, governments should provide additional, priority funding to cover both the cost of relevant in-service training in child development, disability and ECEC, and the cost of replacement staff."

Has that happened?

4. The Productivity Commission also made it clear that:

- "There are no data that comprehensively describe the ECEC workforce and services in rural and remote areas." Why does that data not exist?

5. How can government introduce national reforms if such information is unavailable?

6. What steps are being taken to collect that missing data?

7. The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education (NPA ECE) includes a requirement that every child will have access to 15 hours of preschool per week in the year before formal schooling by 2013. How are we going?

Answer

1. The Australian Government is providing \$12.28 million to states and territories to support the transition to the National Quality Framework (NQF). This assistance includes the provision of training for Authorised Officers.

DEEWR has worked with state and territory governments to develop and deliver a comprehensive package of training and reference materials to support Authorised Officers in exercising their functions under the NQF.

2-3. Through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program the Australian Government provides approximately \$100 million annually to increase the knowledge and skills of educators and the capacity of Child Care Benefit approved early childhood education and care services, by providing professional development, advice, access to additional resources and inclusion support assistance through the Inclusion Support Subsidy.

The Australian Government has also provided \$955 million in funding, over five years to states and territories to ensure that by 2013 all Australian children (including those with additional needs) have access to a quality early childhood education program, delivered by a university trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year in the year before full-time schooling. Under a new National Partnership covering the period from 1 July 2013 to 31 December 2014, the Australian Government is contributing a further \$655 million nationally to state and territory governments to maintain universal access to early childhood education.

4-6. Under the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care, the Australian and state and territory governments have worked collaboratively to improve data collection. This is supplemented by:

- the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection which is conducted annually to provide statistics of children's enrolment and attendance at preschool programs,
- 2010 and 2013 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census, and
- labour market statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

7. In 2012, 89 per cent of children were enrolled in an early childhood education program or 266 000. This is 60 000 more children enrolled than in 2008. In 2012, 56 per cent of children were enrolled in a preschool program for 15 hours a week in the year before full-time schooling.