

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

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Child Care

DEEWR Question No. EW0643_12

Senator Nash provided in writing.

“Refers to previous DEEWR Question No [EW0445_12](#)”

Question

childcare workers – Vacancy rate

Following up on Question on Notice reply from budget estimates regarding childcare workers vacancy rates -

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/estimates/bud_1112/answers/EW0445_12.pdf DEEWR states the proportion of child-care workers leaving the occupation and needing to be replaced is 15.7 per cent annually and in relation to early childhood teachers, degree qualified teachers, the vacancy rate is 8.9 per cent annually. • The dept advised Senator Back during SBE hearing questioning on 20 Oct 2011 that it hasn't examined the reasons why there is a higher vacancy rate for childcare workers – why not? • What is being done to prevent childcare workers from leaving? • Also what is being done to replace these workers.

Answer

The vacancy rates of 8.9 per cent and 15.7 per cent for early childhood teachers and child care workers respectively are consistent with other occupations of similar qualification requirements. For example, Primary Teachers also have a vacancy rate of 8.9 per cent, and teacher's aides have a vacancy rate of 14.5 per cent.

Further work is being done through the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce Census to examine the turnover rates through the sector and the reasons for worker movements.

To support the transition to the National Quality Framework, the Government is developing a Workforce Strategy for the Early Childhood Development sector in consultation with the state and territory Governments and other key sector stakeholders. The Strategy will highlight challenges and opportunities as well as identify potential actions for the sector, in partnership with all levels of government, to meet the workforce requirements for the coming years.

The Government has also provided funding for a package of measures to train and retain a quality early childhood workforce. This includes:

- \$12.4 million to reduce by about half the HECS-HELP debt of early childhood education teachers who work in areas of high need based on postcode location. The Government has also provided \$83 million over four years from 2009-10 to reduce HECS-HELP compulsory repayments for nursing and education graduates. Students who graduate from an education or nursing course of study (including early childhood education) that is required for initial entry to work as a teacher or nurse from second semester 2009 onwards will be eligible for the benefit if they work in a related profession.
- \$53.9 million to create additional Commonwealth supported university places for students wishing to undertake early childhood education qualifications, starting with 500 places in 2009 and rising to 1500 additional places by 2011.
- \$115 million from 2008-09 to 2013-14 to support over 8000 people per year, including existing child care workers, to gain a vocational education and training qualification. The funding will be used to cover regulated course fees for Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Children's Services courses delivered by TAFE institutes or other government training providers.

In the 2011-12 Budget, the Government announced a further investment of \$9.2 million over four years to improve the quality and uptake of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessments for early childhood workers. As well as improving access to RPL for early childhood educators, additional assistance is provided to educators in rural and remote areas who are wishing to upgrade their qualifications and who often experience difficulty in accessing RPL. The RPL package includes:

- development of a new national assessment tool for Certificate III, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Children's services
- training for 600 existing RPL assessors in the use of the new tool
- grants of up to \$1125 for rural and remote early childhood workers to contribute to out of pocket expenses associated with accessing RPL.

Training of existing RPL assessors in the new national RPL tool is expected to commence in early 2012. The RPL assessors will then be able to commence assessing early childhood workers progressively.

In addition to the specific early childhood education and care workforce initiatives, the Government also announced a range of skills measures in the 2011-12 Budget to increase the capacity of the national training system to respond to Australian industries skills and workforce development needs.

The Building Australia's Future Workforce package provides a \$3.02 billion investment over six years for a new approach to deliver the skilled workers the economy needs and ensure more Australians have the opportunity to share in the nation's prosperity. This is in addition to new funding of more than \$2 billion over the next four years for Australia's university sector.

The National Workforce Development Fund is a key component of the Australian Government's Building Australia's Future Workforce package. The Fund is one of a number of new initiatives that will be put in place to forge stronger ties between industry and the education system.

Through the Fund the Government will provide \$558 million in funding to support training and workforce development. This includes \$359 million in new funding and \$199 million through the previously announced Critical Skills Investment Fund (CSIF). A proportion of the Fund will be set aside for regional Australia.