Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-2014

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Department of Education Question No. ED0144_14
Senator Ruston provided in writing.

Question
Misinformation about the Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF) by unions

1. I recall reports of unions providing misinformation about the EYQF to centres and child care workers. Can the Department advise what misinformation was provided and by whom?
2. What was the reaction of child care services and workers?
3. What steps did the Department take to address this misinformation?
4. What impact did this misinformation have?

Answer

1. The department monitored all media streams relevant to the Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF).The United Voice *Big Steps* Facebook page made several statements that staff needed to join the union in order to be eligible for funding under the EYQF.
2. Child care service directors and workers expressed concerns (through phone, email and correspondence to the former government) that the union was providing information that was not consistent with information being issued by the department.
3. The department took a number of steps to address alleged misinformation by unions including:
    - revising its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the departmental website regarding eligibility for the EYQF.
    - writing to the National Secretary of United Voice on 11 April 2013 requesting that the FAQs be forwarded to United Voice officials and delegates to ensure accurate information was being relayed to the sector.
    - writing to all long day care services on 18 April 2013 to reiterate that the only source of definitive information regarding the operation of the EYQF was the departmental website and that FAQs had been updated to include information that union membership was not a requirement for EYQF eligibility.
4. The department does not have any information regarding possible impacts.