



**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP  
ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

12 AUG 2014

Our Ref MC14-007705  
Your Ref 933/1400

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2014 to the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning the petition submitted by 1376 Australian citizens, regarding federal funding for kindergartens. As the matter raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Education, your letter was referred to me for response.

I note the concerns raised in the petition around the uncertainty of funding beyond the conclusion of the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access, which terminates on 31 December 2014.

The Australian Government supports quality child care and early learning and recognises that learning is most effective when it begins at a young age. The Government is committed to a thriving child care and early learning sector that delivers flexible, accessible, and affordable quality education and care.

The National Partnership on Universal Access (the National Partnership), agreed between the previous government and all states and territories in 2013, provides funding until 31 December 2014.

A requirement of the National Partnership is for a review 'to be completed by 30 June 2014 to enable a decision before the end of 2014'. The purpose of the review is to assess the degree to which the agreed objectives, outcomes and outputs of the National Partnership have been achieved.

The review has been finalised and is due to be considered at the next Ministerial Education Council meeting on 15 August 2014.

It should be noted that there was no commitment by the previous government to ongoing funding for the National Partnership. While the Government has made provision for funding in the contingency reserve as reported in the 2014–15 Budget documents, any decisions are subject to the findings of the review and subject to negotiation with the states and territories

The Government is taking a careful approach to the review, taking into account relevant information to determine the best way forward for Australia's children and families. The Government wants to see evidence of what has been achieved, the most efficient service delivery models and whether return on the Government's investment of \$1.6 billion over six financial years has been maximised.

The Government will not comment on arrangements beyond 2014 until the findings of the review are analysed and considered by the Education Council. The public release of the review findings is a matter for the Education Council.

The review is one of a number of processes looking at aspects of child care and early learning in Australia throughout 2014. These include, the review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care and the Productivity Commission inquiry into how the child care and early learning system can be made more flexible, affordable and accessible.

The Productivity Commission's consultation draft report on its inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning was released on 22 July 2014. The Commission is undertaking further consultations during August and will accept submission 5 September 2014. The Commission is scheduled to provide its final report to Government by the end of October 2014.

The Government will consider all the evidence available in determining the best way forward for Australia's children and families.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising their concerns.

Yours sincerely

**The Hon Sussan Ley MF**