

Portfolio Question No	Department Or Agency	Senator	Broad Topic	Question Text	Written Hansard
SQ25-000319	Department of Education	Fatima Payman	Four Corners' report - Childcare centres	<p>Four Corners' recent report on childcare centres revealed a culture of abuse and neglect of Australia's children in these facilities.</p> <p>1. Firstly, how much has the government spent on subsidising childcare in the 2024-25 financial year so far?</p> <p>2. How much does the government expect it will spend on subsidising childcare in the 2025-26 financial year?</p> <p>3. While the Prime Minister has expressed "deep concern" about these accounts of abuse, the responsibility for oversight has been laid at the feet of the states. Given the Federal Government spends billions of dollars each year in childcare subsidies, is there not an onus on the government to ensure that this money is being spent on quality services?</p> <p>4. The 2023 Labor National Platform commits the government to delivering "affordable, quality childcare and before and after school care". Is this commitment to quality based on a blind faith in the states' regulation of childcare?</p> <p>5. What action, if any, will be taken to address the culture of abuse in these facilities?</p> <p>6. The Productivity Commission recommended a review of the National Quality Framework in a report last year. Will the government initiate such a review?</p> <p>7. The report also recommended increased funding to state and territory regulatory authorities to improve their oversight capability. Is this an avenue the government is exploring?</p> <p>8. While a Royal Commission would be slow-moving and ineffective in addressing the issue of abuse in child care, a statutory watchdog such as a child care ombudsman would be able to take action on</p>	Written

				complaints quickly. Has the government considered a watchdog as a potential response to this issue?	
SQ25-000320	Department of Education	Steph Hodgins-May	Cheaper Child Care reform	<p>1. The Minister has recently stated that the government's cheaper childcare reforms cut the cost of early learning by 17% when first introduced, leaving families \$4,400 better off.. How does the government view this issue in the context of the ongoing affordability challenges for families?</p> <p>2. The Cheaper Childcare reform began in June 2023, but according to the Report on Government Services, the median weekly cost of 50 hours of care has gone from \$550 to \$670, despite the government increasing subsidy rates to 90% in 2023. How effective does the government think this has been, particularly given the dominance of for-profit providers which are linked to higher fees, lower wages, and reduced care quality?</p>	Written
SQ25-000321	Department of Education	Steph Hodgins-May	Child Care Subsidy model	<p>1. The Department of Education administers the Child Care Subsidy Scheme. How is the government tackling fraud within the system?</p> <p>2. The current Child Care Subsidy model fails families by not guaranteeing access to childcare and not protecting them from fee hikes. Additionally, it has created a situation where for-profit providers can take advantage of families. What actions are being taken to address these issues?</p> <p>3. If fees continue to rise at rates faster than CPI, when will the average fee fall below the hourly fee cap? How will this affect affordability for families in the long term?</p> <p>4. How concerned is the government about some centres spending as little as 33c per meal for children in order to cut costs?</p>	Written
SQ25-000322	Department of Education	Steph Hodgins-May	Workforce	<p>1. The government offered workers a wage subsidy, but the take-up rate has been slow. What are the reasons for this slow uptake, and what is being done to address it?</p> <p>2. The Four Corners investigation (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-18/childcare-centres-regulation-quality-qualification-four-corners/105062514) into childcare revealed a workforce shortage of 21,000 and concerns</p>	Written

				about worker burnout. Is the government concerned about the compromise of qualifications with the introduction of shorter courses to fill workforce gaps?	
SQ25-000323	Department of Education	Steph Hodgins-May	Childcare deserts	<p>1. The ACCC and Productivity Commission have referred to childcare deserts, where new centres open in wealthy areas, largely driven by the childcare subsidy. How is the government planning to address this disparity, beyond the \$1 billion fund? Will this fund solve the problem of accessibility in under-served areas?</p> <p>2. Nearly one in four Australians live in childcare deserts, where there are more than three children per childcare place. How is the government tackling this issue?</p>	Written
SQ25-000324	Department of Education	Steph Hodgins-May	Regulation and quality	<p>The government has made no substantial move on funding to monitor and enforce national quality standards, which fall under Commonwealth jurisdiction.</p> <p>1. What is the government doing to address the chronic underreporting of incidents in childcare settings?</p> <p>2. What is being done to assure parents that their children are safe when attending childcare, particularly in light of concerns about the quality of care in some centres?</p> <p>3. Why isn't the childcare sector given the same level of scrutiny as aged care, given that both involve vulnerable populations, and why hasn't there been an inquiry into the sector?</p> <p>4. Has the government enquired/looked into setting up an independent national commission to oversee quality and safety? Why/why not"</p> <p>a. If yes - what did the government find? Are there any barriers to its establishment?</p> <p>5. Why hasn't the government responded to the Productivity Commission's recommendations, including an independent review of ACECQA, additional funding for the states, and introducing financial penalties for centres that continually fail to meet quality standards?</p>	Written

				<p>6. The Productivity Commission has said that the long time between quality assessments increases the risk of poor-quality services. Given that serious incidents, including injuries and children being unaccounted for, are on the rise, why hasn't the government acted to address this?</p> <p>7. The Minister and the Prime Minister have recently stated that most centres do the right thing and it is only a "very small few" that don't. How does the government know this, given that the Productivity Commission found that quality ratings are reassessed on average every four years, and in some cases, centres are rated once every nine years, with up to 10% of services never rated at all?</p> <p>8. What is the annual budget for ACECQA, and how has that funding changed over the past five years?</p> <p>9. Given that the Productivity Commission's report came out almost a year ago, why is the government still sitting on these recommendations and failing to act?</p>	
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