



Audit of Early Years Quality Fund under review

Parliament's Joint Public Accounts Committee will hold a public hearing on Thursday as part of its review of an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report on the administration of the Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF). The ANAO and the Departments of Education, Social Services, Finance, and Prime Minister and Cabinet will appear as witnesses.

Committee Chair, Dr Andrew Southcott MP, said that a number of issues raised in the report required further public scrutiny.

"The ANAO noted that the level of funding available under the EYQF, which was estimated to only cover around 30 per cent of all long day care workers, meant the program would most likely be oversubscribed. In the event, the \$300 million funding cap was reached less than 13 hours after the application process commenced", Dr Southcott said.

"The report concluded that the design of the EYQF policy contained inherent risks and it was foreseeable that these risks—particularly the funding constraints, the first-in first-served approach and the short timeframe—would affect access to the program and its ultimate success".

"The ANAO pointed to gaps in advice from the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations on a number of significant matters and found that the department varied the assessment process at several points while it was underway, did not document significant decisions made during the assessment process, and did not maintain accurate and complete assessment records", Dr Southcott said.

The EYQF was established in July 2013 to provide grants to long day care providers in order to supplement wage increases for childcare workers for a period of two years. The EYQF was ceased in late 2013 and replaced with an alternative program.

The ANAO's findings and recommendations are set out in Report No. 23 (2014-15), *Administration of the Early Years Quality Fund*.

Details of the hearing are as follows:

Thursday, 28 May 2015 – 11.15am to 12.15pm
Committee Room 1R5, Parliament House, Canberra

Further information about the Committee's inquiry, including the program for the hearing, can be accessed from the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa. The hearing will also be streamed live at http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament.

For media comment: please contact Committee Chair, Dr Andrew Southcott MP, on 0402 579 674 (Matthew Hee).

For information about the inquiry and public hearing: please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4615, email jcpaa@aph.gov.au, or visit the Committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>.