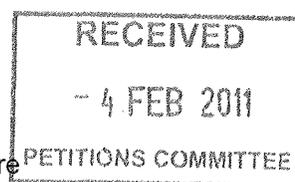




The Hon Kate Ellis MP
Minister for Employment Participation and Child Care
Minister for the Status of Women



The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600


Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letters of 22 and 24 November 2010 forwarding a petition recently considered by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions regarding funding for the Neighbourhood Model Occasional Child Care Program. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Australian Government is committed to maintaining support for families and ensuring access to high quality, affordable child care especially in regional and remote areas. A major component of this commitment is the introduction of the new National Quality Framework for early childhood education and child care.

The Government made the decision in the 2010–11 Federal Budget to cease its funding contribution to state governments for the Neighbourhood Model Occasional Child Care program, in order to generate new funds to support the new National Quality Framework.

The National Quality Framework, agreed in partnership with all state and territory governments, will for the first time set a national quality standard for early childhood education and child care providers across the country. This means that all child care providers will be required to deliver better staff-to-child ratios so that each child gets more individual attention and improve staff qualifications so carers are better equipped to help children learn and develop.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is working with the Western Australian Department for Communities to help identify alternative funding streams for affected services where this may be required. The main focus has been to examine the suitability of services to transition to other existing programs, Commonwealth or state, as appropriate.

I understand that several WA Neighbourhood Model Occasional Child Care services have transitioned to operate as Long Day Care centres approved to administer Child Care Benefit, or are in the process of doing so. These services may also be eligible for Sustainability Assistance funding. This funding is aimed at assisting service providers with their day-to-day operating costs. Sustainability Assistance focuses on the provision of places for children aged less than 24 months and/or services that may be operating in geographically remote areas or areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

A number of Neighbourhood Model Occasional Child Care services will be unable to move to a Long Day Care delivery model. In such cases, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is exploring a range of options with the WA Department for Communities.

I understand that the WA Government has provided a commitment to fund its remaining Neighbourhood Model Occasional Care services until 30 June 2011.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Ellis