

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2014-2015

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood Education and Care

Department of Education Question No. ED0113_15

Senator Lines provided in writing.

Reinstatement of the Neighbourhood Model Occasional Care

Question

Page 82 of Budget paper 2 lists the reinstatement of the Neighbourhood Model Occasional Care and page 40 of the PBS explains that the programme will commence from 1 July 2014 with states and territories being asked to commit 45 per cent of total cost.

- a) When did the government consult the states and territories about a new partnership?
- b) Are all jurisdictions ready to re-commence the program on 1 July?
- c) Have all states and territories agreed to a co-contribution?
- d) What is the rationale for states being asked to contribute 45% of funding when it was only 30% contribution from states under the previous agreement?
- e) Will the federal funds be directed to state and territory governments to distribute?
- f) How will the \$3 million per year be distributed amongst the states? How much will each state and territory get? Will it be evenly split?
- g) Will there be an application process? If so, what will that look like and can that happen in a few short weeks?
- h) Can services that provide occasional care receive government funding under other programs?
- i) What is the rationale for providing taxpayer funds to non-regulated services? How will the department ensure quality and safety of children under the program?

Answer

- a) The Assistant Minister for Education, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, began consultations with her state and territory colleagues in late 2013 and formally wrote to them in February 2014 seeking their support for the programme.
- b) The consultations with the states and territories are continuing and the terms and conditions of the National Partnership Agreement are not yet finalised.
- c) Consultations are continuing with the states and territories regarding the terms and conditions of the National Partnership. The funding from the Commonwealth will be contingent upon the states and territories agreeing to a co-contribution.
- d) In 2009-10 the Commonwealth funding contribution to the previous programme represented between 50 to 55 per cent of the cost and the state and territory contribution was between 45 to 50 per cent.
- e) Yes.
- f) It is proposed that the \$12.6 million (over 4 years) in funding be apportioned on the basis of the number of children aged 0 to 5 years (ABS population data).

- g) States and territories will administer the programme and will determine the appropriate process to fund eligible services.
- h) Those Occasional Care services approved to administer Child Care Benefit on behalf of families also receive Operational Support under the Community Support Programme.
Only Occasional Care services that are NOT approved to administer Child Care Benefit on behalf of families will be eligible to receive NOC Programme funding and they will not be eligible to receive other Commonwealth government funding.
- i) Each jurisdiction has the responsibility for licensing and regulation of services which establishes the foundations for quality care by stipulating enforceable standards to support health, safety, welfare and developmental needs of children in formal education and care services.