

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018

Outcome: Early Childhood and Child Care

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000888

Senator Collins, Jacinta provided in writing

Draft community child care fund program guidelines

Question

I have some questions in relation to the draft community child care fund program guidelines – for the non-competitive part of the program:

- It's not stated in the guidelines how much notice services will get about whether they have been successful. How many months in advance on July 2018 will services be advised?
- The guidelines indicate that where grants are to be used for capital improvements, a capital contribution, in kind contributions and designated use periods (where the building will be used by a service for a certain amount of time) might apply. Given many BBFs operate from buildings owned by councils or other third parties – will the Department be taking a flexible approach to these possible requirements?
- Page 15 of the guidelines states "There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant."
- Is this correct?
- Does oversight by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal or some other body not apply to these kind of decisions by a Minister or a delegate?
- Page 14 of the guidelines state "The Assessment Team may apply an equitable funding formula to determine the amount services may require during their transition to the new child care system."
- Could this be provided to help services with applications and planning?
- The guidelines state that the Department can make amendments to them at any time and that reasonable notice will be given to participants.
- Stakeholders have asked if the Department would consider a three month notice period, in appropriate circumstances. Will you consider whether this suggestion might be workable going forward?

Answer

- 1) The Department of Education and Training anticipates advising services at least three months ahead of Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) funding agreements commencing in July 2018.
- 2) As indicated in the draft CCCF restricted non-competitive program guidelines, the department will take a flexible approach to capital co-contributions and in-kind contributions, taking into account the circumstances of services applying for funding under the capital component. It is anticipated that standard designated use period provisions will be required as part of any grant for capital under the CCCF, and the period will vary depending on the nature of the investment.
- 3) There will be no appeal mechanism regarding decisions to approve or not approve a grant under the CCCF restricted non-competitive grant opportunity. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal will not have jurisdiction to review CCCF grant decisions as these decisions are made under program guidelines rather than legislation.

- 4) The department intends to use a range of information to ensure that grant funding is allocated equitably. This will include information provided by services in their CCCF application form, recommendations from transition plans that have been developed by PriceWaterhouse Coopers in partnership with services, and departmental data.

Funding agreement managers from the department will discuss this process with individual services prior to the opening of the first CCCF funding round to help them to prepare for the application process.

- 5) It is standard practice for Australian Government grant guidelines to include provision for changes to be made from time to time. As outlined in the draft CCCF restricted non-competitive program guidelines, the department will provide reasonable notice if any changes are made to the guidelines. The length of the notice period would depend on the nature of the changes and analysis of any resultant impact on services, and the department will ensure that services have adequate time to adapt to any changes.