

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2012-2013**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood, Working Age and Indigenous Participation

DEEWR Question No. EW0863_13

Senator Nash provided in writing.

Questions

Staying Healthy Guidelines

- a) How many childcare centres aren't meeting their quality expectations because they don't have enough compost bins, or trees in the garden?
- b) What categories are centres failing in?
- c) In light of the recently published guidelines on 'Staying Healthy'. Can the Department categorically confirm that if a provider were to allow a shared birthday cake, complete with candles for the birthday to blow out, that a provider would not be marked down by an assessor against the child care standards?
- d) Was anyone in the Department shown a copy of the Staying Healthy booklet prior to its release and endorsement by Ministers Ellis and Plibersek? If so, what advice was given?

Answer

a) & b) A focus of the National Quality Framework and the National Quality Standard is to promote continuous quality improvement in early childhood education and care.

State and Territory Regulatory Authorities are responsible for the regulation of services under the National Quality Framework and for conducting assessment and rating of services against the National Quality Standard.

Services which have been assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard will have their ratings published on the mychild and Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website by mid 2013. ACECQA will use the published outcomes from assessment and rating process to identify particular areas of strength or weakness for services.

c) Under the National Quality Framework, State and Territory Regulatory Authorities assess and rate each service and determine whether they meet the National Quality Standard, including in relation to its overall approach to ensuring health, safety and wellbeing of the children rather than a particular practice.

It should be noted that the *Staying healthy-Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services Guidelines* are published by the National Health, Medical and Research Council (NHMRC). The guidelines state that:

“Staying Healthy is best practice advice to help child care centres make good decisions for children in their care, not a new set of rules. The advice aims to reduce the risk of serious infections and infectious diseases spreading through child care centres to the children’s families, the workers and the community. It’s not about keeping children away from all germs. Assertions that cakes and candles will be “banned” are incorrect. This is not new advice—all of the items mentioned were in the previous edition, published in 2005.”

d) Yes. The Department of Health and Ageing took the lead in providing advice with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations providing input.