



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 1 November 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Care Statewide Training Strategy

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: Child care is one of the most important issues for Queensland families. To give our children the best start, we need to ensure that our childcare workers have the best skills. Today I am pleased to announce that over \$4.2 million has been allocated for child-care training to improve the quality of child care for Queensland children. This funding will go toward implementing an innovative training strategy to upgrade childcare workers' skills and improve the quality of child care for Queensland children.

The Child Care Statewide Training Strategy is aimed at meeting the needs of existing childcare workers who have been unable to access affordable training for various reasons or who are trained in related fields but not qualified in child care. The strategy is a joint initiative of the Department of Families and the Department of Employment and Training to up-skill childcare workers across the state and ensure that future training demands for childcare workers can be met.

The Beattie government has recognised that current delivery will not meet the expected increase in demand for child-care training. For this reason we are committing additional funding over the next three years to TAFE Queensland to assist it in meeting the additional long-term demand. This will not only provide additional opportunities for existing workers who have been unable to access training in the past; it will also provide more flexible training opportunities in the future. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 workers will benefit from the introduction of the strategy. Child-care services will also benefit by having access to a greater pool of qualified staff.

Higher levels of staff education and training have been identified by researchers as being critical to the provision of quality child care. Consultations with the child-care sector have highlighted the need to expand opportunities for childcare workers to access training. The child-care sector has reported experiencing difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff. This has also been identified as a national issue. During consultations for the development of the new regulatory framework for child care in Queensland, the provision of quality care through engaging qualified staff was identified as a key issue. This strategy will help to better meet the needs of existing workers while still meeting the training needs of new students by improving the capacity of the public provision of training.

Under the strategy, workers will be able to participate in an assessment of their existing skills and knowledge at no cost and can access child-care training at subsidised rates. Students will be offered more flexible quality training and assessment for which they will not have to pay material fees. The strategy also addresses the specific needs of remote indigenous workers in the cape, the gulf and the Torres Strait. Workers are expected to be able to enrol in this new training from early 2002 and gain the benefits of the strategy until 30 June 2004.

The Beattie government is committed to meeting the needs of Queensland families and children. This Child Care Statewide Training Strategy is a positive and practical way of improving the qualifications of Queensland's childcare workers to ensure that our children in child care are supervised by highly qualified, professional staff.
