

Question on Notice

No. 944

Asked on 13 October 2015

MISS BOYD ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR TOURISM, MAJOR EVENTS, SMALL BUSINESS AND THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES (HON MS JONES) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan, specifically what measures this program will enact to ensure professionalisation of the sector and measures to stop the some 180 educators that leave the sector each week in Australia?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question and interest in this Government continuing to build an early childhood workforce that has the skills and professional standing needed to ensure quality outcomes for all children and families.

The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce Action Plan (WAP) 2016–19 will provide opportunities for training and skills, and the support necessary to develop the capacity and professionalism of Queensland's vital early childhood workforce. The WAP forms part of the Palaszczuk Government's Working Queensland jobs plan to support and create more jobs for Queenslanders.

A detailed review of the 2011–2014 WAP acknowledged that challenges still remain for early childhood services and educators, particularly for those in rural and remote communities. Extensive consultation with the sector emphasised not just qualifications and skills, but also the importance of early childhood “being valued” as a profession.

The WAP 2016–19 has explicitly responded to these priority issues by identifying the following three priority areas: being valued, qualifications and skills. The WAP 2016–19 will support Queensland's early childhood workforce to be regarded as “professional, qualified and valued”.

In relation to ensuring a professional workforce, the value of working in the sector needs to be better understood and promoted if the profession is to be seen as a career of choice. Under this priority area, the WAP 2016–19 has launched Queensland's first early childhood education and care careers campaign — *Inspire the future. Choose a career in early childhood* — which uses modern multimedia approaches to reach new entrants, career changers and in-service staff. It highlights the way early childhood careers offer people opportunities to make a difference during the most critical time in a child's development.

The WAP 2016–19 commits to identifying options, in consultation with the Queensland College of Teachers, for professional registration for early childhood teachers, to further support the recognition of the early childhood teaching profession.

The WAP 2016–19 supports educators and aspiring early childhood teachers to gain approved early childhood qualifications, ensuring an ongoing supply of quality

educators to meet the demands of a growing workforce. This support is in the form of training subsidies for priority qualifications, scholarships for eligible educators to undertake bridging programs to qualify as early childhood teachers, and additional support for educators such as mentoring and online advice particularly for Indigenous educators studying in rural and remote communities.

The WAP 2016–19 also provides professional development and networking programs to support staff who often work in isolated, small services to respond to the demands of their roles, to help retain valued educators and to reduce staff turnover. Special professional development opportunities will respond to workforce needs in priority skills areas such as working with children and families with complex needs.