

Question on Notice
No. 730
Asked on 27 May 2021

DR C ROWAN ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to the Palaszczuk Government's announced decision to allow transitional arrangements for the employment of Early Childhood Teachers in childcare services to expire in December 2021—

Will the Minister outline (a) how many childcare services will be impacted by this decision and (b) the additional funding and initiatives that will be provided by the State Government to specifically address critical workforce shortages in this sector?

ANSWER:

The requirement for services to engage or have access to a qualified Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) came into effect on 1 January 2012, with transitional arrangements that allowed for an individual to be 'actively working towards their qualification'.

Since 2012 the transitional provisions have been extended twice (2017 and 2019) to allow the sector time to comply. They now have been in place for almost a decade and Queensland's decision to allow them to expire is about ensuring quality early childhood education and care is being delivered to Queensland children by fully qualified ECTs, rather than those who have yet to complete their qualification.

The Department of Education's 2020 Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) census data, which is based on information provided by services, indicates that when Regulation 242 (recognising persons working towards the ECT qualification) of the transitional workforce regulations expires on 31 December 2021, approximately 120 of 2087 services (6%) state they will not meet the qualification and staffing requirements.

The 2020 ECEC census data indicates that only one service in Queensland relies on transitional workforce Regulation 239A (Attendance of an ECT at a service in remote or very remote location) and only one educator relies on transitional workforce Regulation 240 (Qualification requirements for educators working in remote and very remote services).

I met with the Australian Childcare Alliance on 20 May 2021 and committed to working with them and other stakeholders to manage the transition to the requirement from 1 January 2022.

Service providers who are unable to meet the requirements that come into effect from 1 January 2022 may apply to the Queensland Regulatory Authority for a waiver in order to comply with the National Law. Applications for waivers must be accompanied by evidence of attempts to comply with the legislative requirements and will be decided on a case-by-case basis. In relation to funding under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, the department will consider special circumstances in relation to services who have been granted a waiver.

The Queensland Government will continue to work with the sector to address workforce challenges. For example, the department has provided \$4.8 million in grants in 2020 and 2021 for 221 services to support their workforce to complete their qualifications and become more skilled in their role as early childhood educators.

The Queensland Government also provides support for services through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, which includes a standard subsidy for all services to employ a kindergarten teacher and provide professional development to assist them in delivering a kindergarten learning program.

The Queensland Government provides additional funding to an approved kindergarten program service provider operating in a remote location. The Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) funding is for the purpose of attracting and retaining a qualified ECT to deliver a program. Services are responsible for the negotiation of the ECT's salary and the application of ARIA funding.

The following workforce initiatives were delivered by the department during 2020–21:

- Mentoring ECTs program – this program provides provisionally-registered ECTs working in an approved kindergarten program with access to a mentor to support them in their transition to full registration with the Queensland College of Teachers;
- Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) – a community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education program offered in Queensland's remote, rural and urban areas. RATEP provides a direct pathway for educators to gain or upgrade their early childhood qualifications while living and working in their home communities. Delivery is through a mix of online and face-to-face residential block training; and
- Residential blocks – the department has hosted and facilitated quarterly residentials since 2015. The residential blocks provide students living in rural and remote areas access to a week of training and tutorials by their Registered Training Organisation.

During 2021–22, the department will be providing the sector with free workforce planning training to support the sector in identifying and implementing workforce planning strategies.

Also during 2021, the department is developing an Early Childhood Workforce Careers Campaign targeted at attraction, retention, diversity and sustainability of the early childhood education and care workforce.