

Question on Notice

No. 838

Asked on 18 August 2022

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

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise the specific programs that are being funded and delivered by the Department of Education to ensure there is a sufficient and skilled workforce to support early years education?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government continues to support and recognise the early childhood education and care workforce and the critical role they play in ensuring a great start for all Queensland children.

As part of its \$1 billion-plus investment in kindergarten over the next five years, the Palaszczuk Government is investing \$38.5 million over five years to support kindergartens in rural and remote locations to attract and retain Early Childhood Teachers. Under the kindergarten funding reform package, the Department of Education is also investing \$33 million over five years for the Kindy Uplift program to enable participating kindergarten services to better respond to the education and development needs of children. Kindy Uplift funding can be used to purchase professional learning programs for staff, as well as to fund backfill arrangements to enable staff to participate in activities from the kindergarten service's approved Kindy Uplift plan.

In 2022–23, the Palaszczuk Government will continue to support the early childhood workforce through a range of other initiatives, including by:

- delivering four residential blocks to provide students living in rural and remote areas access to a week of training and tutorials by their registered training organisation;
- delivering an Early Childhood Workforce Careers Campaign targeted at attraction, retention, diversity and sustainability of the early childhood education and care workforce;
- working with the Australian Childcare Alliance Queensland (ACA) for the trial of a 'Prac Swap' program; and
- promoting online Workforce Planning Modules which support the sector in identifying and implementing workforce planning strategies to build on the strengths of existing staff and future proof the workforce through succession planning and career development.

These initiatives come on top of previous support provided to the sector, including a \$5 million workforce grants program that enabled 229 early childhood educators to finish their teaching qualifications, and a number of careers campaigns. Together, these initiatives helped increase the number of qualified early childhood teachers by more than 1000 or 44% between 2016 and 2021.

Current workforce challenges are not isolated to Queensland—they are an issue across the country. The Palaszczuk Government continues to work closely with the Australian Government, other jurisdictions and the early childhood sector to implement actions in the *Children's Education and Care National Workforce Strategy – Shaping Our Future*.

This work will be co-ordinated with the development of a National Action Plan on Teacher Shortage, following the 12 August 2022 meeting of Education Ministers. As part of this strategy, the department will be responsible for the leadership of a number of actions identified in the *Implementation and Evaluation Plan* in 2022–23 as well as developing state specific responses in consultation with the sector.