

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

**QUESTION ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017**

Outcome: Early Childhood and Child Care

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ17-000407

Senator Bernardi, Cory provided in writing

Priority of Access - displacement of a child

Question

Please note: the constituent who approached my office regarding being asked to sign a form/contract regarding the possibility of their child having to vacate their child care place for a priority child (Committee Hansard, 1.3.2017, p.73) is not authorised to release that contract, therefore I cannot provide a copy of that document.

While Ms Wilson made it clear that there is no requirement for a child care provider to notify whether they have displaced a child from a child care place in order to put a priority child in that place – and that “we have never heard of anyone being displaced” - can the department confirm if they have ever received notification from a provider that they have displaced a child in order to give their place to a priority child?

Can the Department confirm that the section in the guidelines (regarding a place having to be vacated for a priority child) will not be in the new guidelines?

Is the Department aware of any child care providers who provide parents with and/or ask parents to sign a document that reflects the guidelines regarding a place having to be vacated for a priority child? If so, please provide details of how many providers do this, what states they are in and any further details of the document shown to parents.

Answer

The Department of Education and Training does not receive notification from providers if they displace a child in order to give their place to a priority child. Child care providers are not required to inform the department in such circumstances.

As discussed at Additional Estimates, under the Priority of Access Guidelines, which if used have been used to a very limited extent, given the absence of complaints, priority is to be given to “children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families; children in families which include a disabled person; children in families which include an individual whose taxable income is less than \$44,457 (in 2016–17); children in families with a non-English speaking background; children in socially isolated families; children of single parents”.

The Guidelines, which have been in place since 2000, were reviewed in conjunction with the development of the Child Care Package. The draft of the new Guidelines, which have already been subject to consultation, will include two priorities, which apply to vacant places only, as follows:

- First Priority: a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect (i.e. child receiving Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing)
- Second Priority: a child of a single parent who satisfies, or parents who both satisfy, the activity test through undertaking paid whether or not as an employee.

Whilst the Guidelines are subject to finalisation, the Australian Government did not and will not reinsert the other provisions, which had been removed before the sector consultations held prior to Additional Estimates.

Please see response to SQ17-000061 for information about a child care provider's notification obligations under Priority of Access Guidelines.