

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016**

**Outcome: Early Childhood and Child Care**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000957**

Senator Lines, Sue provided in writing

***24 hours subsidised child care per fortnight***

**Question**

P33 of the RIS it says children in families who have an income under \$65,000 and do not meet the activity test will receive 24 hours subsidised child care per fortnight – “equivalent to two six hour sessions per week.”

- a) Is there evidence that two six hour sessions per week are sufficient for early education outcomes?
- b) What was the response to this measure at the RIS consultation sessions?
- c) Many child care centres charge a daily rate, rather than per hour. In these cases children will only be able to access child care for one day a week. Has this been taken into account? Will there be any further assistance for these children to access the second day?

**Answer**

- a. Providing up to 24 hours per fortnight of subsidised care – equivalent to two weekly six-hour sessions – ensures continued access to early childhood learning for children of low income families and supports parents’ gradual return to work.
- b. Stakeholders reported that flexible operating requirements would have a positive impact on workforce participation. Some stakeholders expressed the view that this measure would require a change of business practices away from the current practice of providing for two full days of child care for the benefit of children’s early learning.
- c. The Jobs for Families Child Care Package does not include any requirements for child care services to alter their charging practices or how they deliver their sessions of care. Under the Package, providers have flexibility in the hours per day and days per week they must open, which is something many have called for. In return, the Government is encouraging the child care sector to offer more flexible sessions of care as an alternative to the 10 to 12 hour sessions currently charged, and to consider changes that deliver flexible, cost-effective care and early learning services for families, especially where the primary purpose of attendance is early learning. Some services are doing this already.