

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 1 - Early Childhood

DEEWR Question No.EW0799_11

Senator Nash provided in writing.

Question

CHILD CARE WORKERS

1. Can the Department clarify whether a child care worker, who has worked in Long Day Care for 10 years, however, does not hold a child care qualification, will be permanently exempt from having to undertake diploma or further study under recognition of prior learning? 2. Given the high staff turnover, which some providers have suggested to us is as high as 40%, has this been factored in to the ongoing training requirements for child care workers?

Answer

1. The Government remains committed to the qualification requirements under the National Quality Standard for early childhood education and care services.

From 1 January 2014, within each long day care centre, half of all staff will need to have (or to be actively working towards) a diploma-level early childhood education and care qualification or above, and the remaining staff will all be required to have (or be actively working towards) a Certificate III level early childhood education and care qualification, or equivalent. An early childhood teacher will also be required to be in attendance when long day care and preschool services are being provided to 25 children or more or some of the time when being provided to less than 25 children.

The new qualification requirements are being phased in over several years so that the sector has time to adjust. Importantly, vocational training for early childhood educators already allows for the recognition of prior learning. This means that child care workers who have acquired skills on the job or have gained skills through other life experiences, can have that knowledge recognised as part of a formal qualification.

The Government has invested additional support for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the early childhood workforce as part of the 2011-2012 Budget. Funding of \$9.2 million has been allocated over four years to assist early childhood workers to access RPL assessments to obtain or upgrade their qualifications through a national RPL assessment process. The Government has provided additional assistance to early child care workers located in rural and remote Australia to access RPL.

The package includes:

- Development of a new national assessment tool for Certificate III, Diploma and Advanced Diploma's in Children's Services.
- Funding for 600 existing RPL assessors to be trained in the use of this tool.

- Grants of up to \$1125 for rural and remote child care workers to cover expenses associated with accessing RPL.

The RPL initiative will commence on 1 July 2011.

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* allows Regulatory Authorities to grant Service and Temporary Waivers in relation to Physical Environment and Staffing Arrangements where a service is unable to meet the staffing requirements as prescribed in the NQS, but is actively working towards obtaining the necessary qualified staff whether by recruitment or upgrading the qualifications of existing staff. In considering applications for waivers, Regulatory Authorities will be able to take local labour market and education and training opportunities into account. It is not anticipated that waivers would be used to provide permanent exemption to educators without qualifications.

2. Data from the ABS Labour Mobility Survey (February 2008, Cat. No. 6209.0) shows the proportion of child care workers leaving the occupation and needing to be replaced is 15.7% (annually) which is moderately higher than the average for all occupations at 13.1%. The proportion of Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers leaving the occupation (and needing to be replaced) is 8.9% annually, which is lower than the 13.1% for all occupations.

The characteristics of the early childhood workforce have been taken into account in the development of the training requirements.