

## **PORTFOLIO REPORT – STATE COUNCIL**

### **Early Childhood Report**

#### **Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2020**

As semester one the 2019 student census there where:

- 17 Kindergarten students at Western Australian Schools of the Air (SOTA)
- 19 Pre-primary students at Western Australian Schools of the Air (SOTA)
- 2 Kindergarten students at the Western Australia School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)
- 10 Pre-primary students at the Western Australia School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)

A Parliament of Australia media release on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019, from committee chair member Mr Andrew Laming MP, stated there will be an inquiry into the performance of the Australian education system in remote and regional areas. Areas of interest for Early Childhood were:

- How families of vulnerable young children can access, enrol and remain in early learning, and the collaboration between early and primary education.
- The performance and monitoring of those in home-schooling to maintain national minimum standards.

In Home Care transitional provisions have ~~been~~ extended for an additional 2 years. The Government has extended the deadline for IHC educators to earn their qualification to December 2021.

To meet the transitional requirements IHC educators must:

- Access the expertise of an educator with at least a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, for at least 20 percent of the time care is provided, or
- Have been continuously employed at an early education and care service in a remote or very remote area for at least 15 years.

For more information visit <https://education.gov.au/in-home-care>

The Department of Education have raised concerns with Wanslea IHC Support for allowing distant educator supervision as Child Care Subsidy claimable hours although not being “on air” hours. According to the Department of Education six hours per school day has to be allocated for non-claimable formal school hours. This is severely reducing the hours IHC educators have been claiming which may affect a family’s eligibility for IHC. It is important that the current guidelines are clearly understood to maintain the integrity of the subsidies received.

This is taken from the National IHC Guidelines:

#### **DISTANCE EDUCATION AND HOME SCHOOLING**

Commonwealth funding is provided to state and territory governments for the purposes of providing distance education, including School of the Air (on air and off air) arrangements. Families cannot receive child care subsidies during the time a child is engaged in formal schooling, including for a tutor or governess to supervise the provision of distance education where the care (or part thereof) is for the purpose of the child to undertake a state or territory education program. This longstanding policy is stipulated in section 85BA(1) of the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999* and further clarified in Part 2, Section 8 of the *Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017*. Care provided while a child is completing homework does not constitute formal schooling.

Wanslea will be going through all DE Supervisors to ensure that they have either completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education or are in the process of completing this course.

Community childcare funding for special circumstances has been extended into 2019-2020, where Child Care Centres, IHC providers etc. can apply to receive up to \$10,000 to help with viability issues, drought etc. For more information see <https://www.education.gov.au/community-childcare-fund-cccf-special-circumstances-drought-support>

The Hon Dan Tehan MP announced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019, that early childhood students with a disability will be assisted through the Inclusion Support Program, which provides more than \$500million to help education and care services include children with additional needs alongside their peers.

ICPA Federal Council continue to work towards kindergarten students being eligible for AIC allowance and a National Working with Children Check.