

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

EARLY CHILDHOOD REPORT

Carol Ford – Portfolio Holder, March 2018

The Early Childhood Education area has been the focus of quite a bit of attention over the last couple of years especially. We have had very similar motions presented at State Conference each year as a result of issues being on going, with frustration I know but changes take time and are often out of our control.

A media release in February 2018 from Minister for Education and Training Senator Simon Birmingham outlines that the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education has been extended to 2019. With the allocation of \$427.8 million in 2018 and \$440 million in 2019 and an overhaul of the Child Care system there are big changes afoot in many areas. The minister states "This will include more than 348,000 children having access to 15 hours quality early learning in the year before school. The States must find ways to motivate parents of educationally vulnerable pre-schoolers to both enrol and attend. The extension of the National Partnership gives the government time to work through the issues that keep children from attending pre-school and to develop enduring policy beyond 2019 that ensures children are not just enrolling but also attending and benefitting from pre-school programs in readiness for school."

Under the new package the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will replace the existing Childcare Benefit and Child Care Rebate. CCS will be the main way the government assists families with their Child Care fees. CCS will be supported by the Child Care Safety Net, which aims to give the most vulnerable children a strong start while supporting parents into work. Families currently using childcare will be contacted in early 2018 with more details about the changes.

In Home Care from July 2, 2018

Federal Council put in a submission for the IHC National Guidelines in January 2018. Final Guidelines are expected to be released March 2018.

The new arrangements will reset the current In Home Care (IHC) program and replace the Nanny Pilot Scheme with IHC Support Agencies to service each State & Territory to distribute places to Child Care Subsidy approved services. 3000 places will be available throughout Australia. The policy for IHC is based on the findings from the reviews of the current IHC arrangements, the evaluation of the Nanny Pilot Scheme and feedback from families, services and other key stakeholders. The government received over 200 responses and has considered the feedback in finalizing the guidelines.

Working with Children Check

The 2015 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse report recommends "that all State and Territory governments should amend their WWCC laws to enable WWCC from other jurisdictions to be recognized and accepted."

Responses to correspondence with the government and opposition don't sound overly hopeful that things will change quickly. Federal meeting with Dept. Education & Training ECE in December 2017 reported that they have a national working group working on this and recommendations for any decisions are likely to be

made in the first half of 2018.

AIC Distance Education Allowance for 4 Year Old's

This is still on the agenda and Federal are advocating to get this allowance in place for 4 year olds doing Distance Education.