



Hon Geoff Wilson MP
Member for Ferny Grove



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Education and Training

24 DEC 2010

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Email: TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 1585-10 tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 24 November 2010 expressing concern that changes to the kindergarten funding model will result in a reduction of funding to community kindergartens and their subsequent viability.

The Queensland Government is committed to major reforms of early childhood services to ensure all four year old children in Queensland have access to a quality kindergarten program for at least 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year. These reforms, including the introduction of the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, have implications for existing kindergarten services currently receiving funding under the Department of Education Community Kindergarten Funding Scheme (DECKAS).

The Queensland Government recognises the valuable role that community kindergarten services have played in Queensland for more than a hundred years and is committed to ensuring these services continue to play a key role in providing quality early childhood education programs to Queensland children in the future.

Recommended transition arrangements are in place to help services adjust to the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme. Importantly, the Queensland Government has guaranteed that no existing community kindergarten service will receive less financial support under the new funding scheme.

All existing community kindergarten services will receive a base level of funding equivalent to their 2010 DECKAS entitlement, plus annual indexation until January 2014. From then, funding will continue to be provided at no less than this level until services are eligible for more funding through the new scheme.

Importantly, under the new funding scheme many existing services will receive more funding from the start of 2011.

There are a small number of long day care services across Queensland that are currently receiving DECKAS funding to provide kindergarten programs. Eligible families attending these services can claim Australian Government payments including Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate to reduce their out-of-pocket costs. However, these benefits are not available to families whose children attend community kindergarten services.

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The Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme takes account of taxation relief and additional funding available to families who access long day care, and provides differing levels of funding based on service type. The effect of this is that the net out-of-pocket costs for a child's participation in a kindergarten program overall will be generally comparable regardless of whether the child attends a community kindergarten or long day care service.

Consistent with current DECKAS arrangements, Government funding is provided to support services to offer kindergarten programs to children who are in the year before they start Prep. I acknowledge that in some areas, due to population and demographic characteristics, there may be insufficient kindergarten-age children to fill a service. In these circumstances existing services can continue to fill residual vacancies with younger children without experiencing a reduction in their funding guarantee. However, in preparing for 2011 and beyond, services are encouraged to implement strategies to maximise enrolments of eligible-age children so that every four-year old Queensland child has the opportunity to participate in a kindergarten program and be better prepared for starting school.

The Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme is a major investment in early childhood education. This substantial subsidy helps keep kindergarten affordable and provides all Queensland children with a flying start to learning and life.

I commend kindergarten program providers for the important work they do with some of our youngest Queenslanders.

For further information to support the transition of existing DECKAS-funded services to the requirements of the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, please call the Kindy Hotline on 1800 4 KINDY (1800 454 639).

I have also enclosed a fact sheet, recently distributed to all existing DECKAS-funded services, advising of the transition arrangements and supports in place, including the funding guarantee, as services move toward meeting the requirements of the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme.

Yours sincerely



GEOFF WILSON MP
Minister for Education and Training

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Kindergarten reforms

and what they mean for existing services



Giving children a flying start

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Information for existing DECKAS*-funded kindergarten services making the transition to the new funding scheme

The way in which kindergarten programs are provided in Queensland is changing. There are also changes starting in 2011 to how existing kindergarten services are funded by the State Government.

The information in this brochure will assist you to better understand the kindergarten reforms, how they will affect your service, and what you can do to successfully manage the transition to the new kindergarten funding scheme.

Kindergarten services in Queensland

The Queensland Government is committed to providing universal access to quality kindergarten programs in the year before Prep, to meet standards set by the Australian Government under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

*Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme (DECKAS)

It is the Queensland Government's aim to achieve a 95 per cent participation rate of four-year-old children in kindergarten programs delivered by a qualified teacher for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year.

It is important that all Queensland children and their families have access to early childhood education programs of the same high standard as those offered across the rest of Australia.

That is why the Government is encouraging and supporting all existing community kindergarten services to provide programs for at least 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year to kindy-age children (i.e. those turning at least four by June 30 of the year they start kindergarten).

Only 32 per cent of kindy-age Queensland children participated in a kindergarten program in 2009. Given this, we need to do things differently to ensure every child gets the opportunity for a quality early education in the year before Prep.

Community kindergarten services have a proud 103 year tradition in Queensland, and have an important role in the Queensland Government's plan to provide all children with access to a kindergarten program by 2014.

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting community kindergarten services to continue to play a key role in providing quality early childhood education programs for Queensland children.

The new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme

The current DECKAS is ceasing, and from January 2011, the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme will apply. The introduction of the new funding scheme may hold significant implications for your service.

Under DECKAS arrangements, your service currently receives funding for approximately 80 per cent of approved staff costs. For the first time, the new funding scheme recognises the different circumstances of Queensland families and services.

Under the new funding scheme, your service will receive a standard subsidy for each kindy-age child enrolled. This subsidy rate varies according to your service type (e.g. kindergarten service or long day care service).

Effective July 2010 to June 2011, the standard subsidy available to kindergarten services for each child participating in a kindergarten program is \$2168.25 per year. The standard subsidy available to long day care services for each child participating in a kindergarten program is \$1239.00 per year.

These subsidies are indexed annually in July, with the rate applicable at July 2010 being 3.25 per cent. Notably, the level of indexation will vary from year to year, based on a composite of the forecast Wage Price Index and Consumer Price Index, as determined by Queensland Treasury.

Additional subsidies are also available to services as follows:

- Remote Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) subsidy — per child loading of 50 per cent of the standard subsidy for services in remote and very remote locations to help attract and retain qualified teachers
- Low socioeconomic subsidy — per child loading of 25 per cent of the standard subsidy for services operating in low socioeconomic areas to offset fees and reduce out-of-pocket expenses for parents
- Health Care Card subsidy — provided to services **not** in receipt of the low socioeconomic subsidy, for each child whose parent/carer/guardian holds an Australian Government Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card. The Health Care Card subsidy for kindergarten providers **not** eligible for the Australian Government's Child Care Benefit (CCB) is \$1135.75 per child per annum. The subsidy for kindergarten providers eligible to receive CCB on behalf of eligible families is \$387.19 per child per annum. The subsidy is provided directly to services to offset fees and reduce out-of-pocket expenses for eligible parents.

You can estimate the level of funding your service may receive under the new funding scheme using the online Kindergarten Funding Calculator at: www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/kindergarten/calculator.html

A real funding guarantee

Many community kindergarten services will be eligible for more funding under the new scheme, and no service will receive less funding. The Government has committed that a base level of funding will be provided at no less than the level received by services at the end of 2010.

The Queensland Government has guaranteed that the minimum level of funding assistance for your service in 2011 and beyond will be based on the salary levels of your current teaching staff in December 2010.

To ensure a real funding guarantee is provided for community kindergarten services, annual indexation will continue to apply until January 2014. From then, funding will continue at that level until your service is eligible for an increased level of funding under the new funding scheme.

New requirements for services

As part of the changes required under the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, all community kindergarten services are required to be a member of a Central Governing Body and be an approved kindergarten program provider.

Becoming a member of a Central Governing Body

Central governing bodies are organisations approved by the Minister for Education and Training to administer Queensland Government funding and to support member services to provide quality and inclusive kindergarten programs.

Central governing bodies are required to ensure their member services continue to meet the requirements of an approved kindergarten program provider, and are to work with member services to maximise enrolments of kindy-age children. Full details of the role and responsibilities of a central governing body are available on the Department of Education and Training's website: www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/kindergarten/central-gov-bodies.html

There are five organisations approved as central governing bodies to support Queensland's community kindergarten services. Names and contact details of these organisations are:

C&K

Contact: Barrie Elvish
Ph: 3552 5304 Email: cgb@candk.asn.au

Independent Schools Queensland

Contact: Rebecca McKinnon
Ph: 3228 1515 Email: isqcgba@aisq.qld.edu.au

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Contact: central governing body unit
Ph: 3336 9310 Email: cgb@qcec.catholic.edu.au

Queensland Lutheran Early Childhood Services

Contact: Susan Shaw
Ph: 3511 4079 Email: admin@qlecs.org.au

The Gowrie (Qld) Inc

Contact: Jane Bourne
Ph: 3252 2667 Email: jane.bourne@ladygowrie.com.au

To ensure your service has sufficient opportunity to consider and select the central governing body that best meets your needs, you have until 30 June 2011 to make this important decision. If your service aligns with a central governing body prior to 31 December 2010, you will receive your funding via that organisation for the period of January to June 2011. Services that align with an organisation between 1 January and 30 June 2011 will receive their payment for Semester 1 2011 through C&K, and then via their selected central governing body from the start of the 2011–12 financial year.

Becoming an approved kindergarten program provider

Under the new funding scheme, an approved kindergarten program provider is one that delivers a learning program that:

- is provided for children in the year prior to Prep (i.e. children who are at least four years old by 30 June in the year they participate in an approved kindergarten program) for at least 15 hours per week and 40 weeks per year
- is aligned with the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline or an education program accredited by the Queensland Studies Authority.
- is delivered by one of the following:
 - a four-year qualified early childhood education teacher, from the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) list of qualifications
 - a QCT-registered teacher with an approved early childhood qualification that meets the requirements of sections 113 [(a) to (c)] or 114 of the *Child Care Regulation 2003*
 - a primary teacher currently registered with the QCT who is studying towards an approved early childhood qualification that meets the requirements of sections 113 [(a) to (c)] or 114 of the *Child Care Regulation 2003* (refer www.communities.qld.gov.au/childcare/workingcc/qualifications.html for a list of approved qualifications).

Services also need to hold appropriate public liability insurance of at least \$10 million.

Approval as a kindergarten program provider is subject to ongoing compliance with the above mandatory criteria.

All new kindergarten programs will meet these criteria, be recognised as approved kindergarten program providers, and be funded under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme.

It is understood some existing services require time and support to achieve this target.

That is why transition arrangements are in place, and support and guidance is available for your service as it moves towards meeting requirements of the new scheme.

As existing services demonstrate that they are meeting the above criteria, they will be issued with a certificate that identifies them as an approved kindergarten program provider.

Making the transition to the new requirements

To help existing services adjust to the requirements of the new funding scheme, in addition to the Queensland Government's real funding guarantee, transition arrangements have been confirmed.

The table opposite provides a guide to the transition arrangements applicable to all existing DECKAS-funded services.

Notably, services that meet these recommended actions can access any increased funding they are eligible for under the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme.

For services where there may be difficulties meeting the transition arrangements, they will be asked to demonstrate the unique circumstances that hinder their ability to meet these requirements. In these instances, the service will be asked to work with C&K's Business Advisory Service to demonstrate the progress being achieved, and negotiate variations to these targets. These services will continue to receive their base level of funding.

Recommended actions for all services

	Action for 2011	Action for 2012
Real funding guarantee	At a minimum, services will receive funding in 2011 at the 2010 DECKAS level (which includes the 4% increase from July 2010). Indexation will also apply from July 2011, based on a composite of 75% of the forecast Wage Price Index and 25% of the forecast Consumer Price Index as determined by Queensland Treasury. Services eligible for more funding under the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme will receive the higher level of funding according to their eligibility.	Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme to apply, with continuation of the real funding guarantee for eligible services.
Program duration for full-time services	Services to offer the kindergarten program for at least 13 hours and 45 minutes per week, 40 weeks per year.	Services to offer the kindergarten program for at least 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year.
Program duration for small, part-time regional services	Small, part-time regional services to offer a program for at least 11 hours per week for 40 weeks, or maintain their existing hours, whichever is the greatest.	These services to be funded under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme or other arrangements that recognise the unique circumstances of service provision in small communities.
Age of children	Services to prioritise and maximise enrolments of kindy-age children (children who are at least four years old by 30 June 2011). Pre-kindy-age children can be enrolled when residual vacancies exist.	Subsidies under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme to only apply to kindy-age children. At a minimum, existing services will receive funding at level received at the end of 2010, plus annual indexation.
Central Governing Body (CGB)	Services to have formalised their membership of a CGB by 30 June 2011.	Continued membership with a CGB.
DECKAS-funded services eligible to collect Child Care Benefit on behalf of parents (i.e. long day care services)	The real funding guarantee to apply (see above).	Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme to apply, which applies a differential standard subsidy according to type of service (i.e. long day care or kindergarten service).
Curriculum/education program	Services may continue to base their educational program on C&K's <i>Building Waterfalls</i> curriculum, or alternatively implement the new <i>Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline</i> .	Services will be required to implement the <i>Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline</i> , or an education program accredited by the Queensland Studies Authority.
Funding for children with a disability	Services to continue to access existing support programs, for example, the Non-School Organisations (NSO) funding and Education Queensland's Early Childhood Development Program.	Future arrangements to be confirmed.
Delayed entry and exit to the kindergarten program	Services to continue to implement the existing process for families seeking enrolment in 2011.	Future arrangements to be confirmed.
Teacher qualifications	Teachers currently employed in services are deemed to comply with the teacher qualification requirements for delivering the kindergarten program in Queensland. Staff recruited to existing services in 2011 will need to meet the teacher qualification requirements.	Qualification requirements of the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme to apply.



Program duration

The Queensland Government actively encourages your service to plan to deliver a kindergarten program for 15 hours per week for 40 weeks per year.

As an interim step, services can deliver a kindergarten program for at least 13 hours and 45 minutes per week, for 40 weeks per year in 2011, moving to 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year in 2012.

Further consideration has been given to the needs of small part-time kindergarten services operating in regional communities. In 2011, these services can offer a program for at least 11 hours per week for 40 weeks per year, or maintain existing hours (whichever is greater).

Your service has flexibility regarding how programs are provided to meet the needs of local families.

Some examples of how 15-hour programs may be delivered include:

- 2 days a week operating from 8.30 am to 4 pm each day (7.5 hours/per day)
- 3 days a week operating from 9 am to 2 pm each day (5 hours/per day)
- over a 5 day fortnight from 9 am to 3 pm each day (6 hours/per day).

In recognition that non-state schools typically operate for less than 40 weeks of the year, there is some flexibility around program duration for non-state schools that deliver an approved kindergarten program. To enable alignment with school terms, approved kindergarten programs delivered by non-state schools are eligible for funding under the new scheme if the kindergarten program is provided for a minimum of 600 hours and 37 weeks over the course of the school year. For example, a kindergarten program may be offered for 16 hours 15 minutes per week for no less than 37 weeks, and therefore provide 601 hours and 15 minutes program duration over the course of the year.

Age of children enrolled

The Government is committed to ensuring access for all children to a quality kindergarten program in the year prior to Prep.

Consistent with the current arrangements of DECKAS, Government funding is provided to support services to offer kindergarten programs to children aged at least four by 30 June in the year they start kindergarten.

In preparing for 2011 and beyond, services are to implement strategies to maximise enrolments of kindy-age children.

Strategies may include:

- promoting the service widely in the media and local community (e.g. schools, playgroups, shopping centres, child health centres)
- widening the local catchment area as needed
- prioritising the enrolment of kindy-age children ahead of younger children, regardless of their place on the waiting list.

In some areas, due to population and demographic characteristics, there are insufficient kindy-age children to fill a service. To ensure these services can provide a viable program for the maximum number of four-year-olds, services will continue to be able to fill residual vacancies with pre-kindy-age children. In instances where a service has enrolled pre-kindy-age children and is then contacted by a family wanting to enrol a kindy-age child, the service should refer to, and be guided by, its own enrolment policy or that of its selected central governing body.

The Government will also run a statewide promotional campaign about the benefits of kindergarten programs, and other targeted strategies to help maximise the enrolments of eligible-age children.

Children with additional needs

Funding is available for children who would benefit from either delayed entry to kindergarten or another year in a kindergarten program. Guidelines, approved processes and funding arrangements regarding delayed entry and exit to the kindergarten program will be confirmed in the near future. These are currently being developed in conjunction with key stakeholders through the Kindergarten Implementation Reference Group. In 2011, your service should continue to implement your existing process regarding the enrolment of these children, in partnership with C&K.

Arrangements for children with a disability are currently being developed, and information will be provided in the future. It should be noted that services are able to continue accessing existing support programs and funding, for example the Non-School Organisations funding, and eligible families can access Education Queensland's Early Childhood Development Program.

Support available for services

Adopting the Queensland Government's significant reforms in early childhood education and care will ensure all Queensland children have access to early childhood education programs of the same high standard as those offered across the rest of Australia.

To support services, the Queensland Government has funded the establishment of a new, free business advisory service by its *Toward Q2* partner C&K, to work with each existing DECKAS-funded service on a case-by-case basis, to ensure the individual needs and circumstances of their service are addressed during this transition time.

Services are to work with C&K or their chosen central governing body to demonstrate they are moving toward delivering a program of 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, and maximising the enrolment of four-year-old children.

Services can access the new business advisory service by contacting C&K on 1800 177 092 or emailing businessadvisory@candk.asn.au

Additionally, an online forum has been established to enable services to share experiences and ideas as they work towards meeting the requirements of the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme. To apply for access to the project room, please email your name, position at the kindergarten service, the name of your service and your email address to kindyprojectroom@deta.qld.gov.au





Employment arrangements

The Queensland Government recognises that employment arrangements are complex and also undergoing changes. Your service may be a party to an enterprise agreement. Two of the main enterprise agreements in the sector are the *Queensland Early Childhood Agreement 2009* and the *C&K Early Childhood Collective Agreement 2009*. Both of these agreements will notionally expire on 31 December 2010; however, once an agreement expires, the terms and conditions of the agreement continue to operate until the agreement is replaced or cancelled.

Under the new Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme, the employment conditions of staff delivering approved kindergarten programs are not prescribed. As a result of the Australian Government's modern award process, early childhood teachers employed in community kindergarten services, where no enterprise agreement exists, are now covered under the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010*. The Independent Education Union of Australia is the main union with coverage of employees under this award.

Group Leaders and Assistants are now covered under the *Children's Services Award 2010*. The Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union is the main union with coverage of employees under this award. Details of the industrial awards and many enterprise agreements are available on the website of Fair Work Australia, the national workplace relations tribunal, at www.fwa.gov.au

The industrial awards and the National Employment Standards provide minimum pay and conditions for staff, and apply where no enterprise agreements exist. However, the Queensland Government prefers employers to develop appropriate pay and conditions for their employees by participating in enterprise agreement negotiations with the relevant unions and staff.

Services are encouraged to contact their employer representatives for advice about negotiations for a replacement agreement. The two main employer representatives for community kindergarten services are C&K and Australian Community Services Employer Association, which is also a registered employer industrial organisation.