



Hon Geoff Wilson MP
Member for Ferny Grove



**Queensland
Government**

23 DEC 2009
Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Email: Tableoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Minister for Education and Training

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October 2009 regarding Petition Number 1326-09 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, in relation to the moves to change *Employment Awards from the Education Industry Award to the Children's Services Award for Community Kindergarten Employees*, namely, teachers and teacher aides.

I note that the concerns expressed in the petition relate to possible changes to employment conditions for teachers and teacher aides and the fear that the changes will prevent kindergartens from retaining qualified professional teaching staff. The petitioners request the House to reconsider these Award changes.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) is reviewing Federal Awards under the Award Modernisation guidelines set by the Australian Government. The Queensland Government is currently not a respondent to any Federal teaching or children's services Awards and has not been part of the AIRC proceedings regarding this particular matter. I understand that the new Federal Awards will take effect from 1 January 2010.

The AIRC released an exposure draft *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2010 (Teachers' Award)* on 22 May 2009, but deferred the question of Award coverage for preschool teachers working in preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres. I can advise that the AIRC released the deferred decision on 25 September 2009. The decision nominally places preschool teachers under the Exposure Draft Teachers' Award, rather than under a Children's Services Award, as argued for by a number of parties involved in the AIRC proceedings. You may wish to forward a copy of the petition to the AIRC for consideration as part of the exposure draft process.

In relation to Award coverage for teacher aides, the AIRC is yet to make a final decision regarding conditions of employment. It is anticipated that the AIRC will place teacher aides in the early childhood sector under the Health and Welfare Services - Children's Services Award.

A final decision by the AIRC in regard to the Award coverage for teachers and teacher aides may not be made until 4 December 2009.

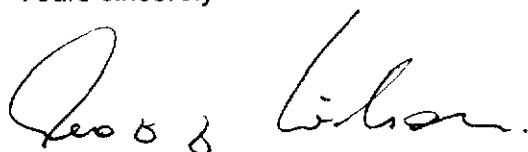
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The Queensland Government recognises the important role of qualified teachers in early childhood education and is committed to providing access to a teacher-led kindergarten program for all children in the year prior to Prep across a range of early education and care settings.

Regardless of which industrial Award will apply to teachers, early childhood education and care services approved by the Queensland Government to provide kindergarten will be required to employ a four-year trained early childhood teacher, or a registered teacher with early childhood qualifications, to lead the kindergarten program. Information on the Queensland Government's kindergarten strategy can be accessed on the Department of Education and Training's website online at www.education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

GEOFF WILSON MP
Minister for Education and Training

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Your ref: Petitions