



Hon John-Paul Langbroek MP
Minister for Education, Training and Employment

03 SEP 2013

Level 22 Education House
30 Mary Street Brisbane 4000
PO Box 15033 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3237 1000
Facsimile +61 7 3211 8011
Email education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie *Neil,*

I refer to e-Petition 2088-13 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 6 August 2013 regarding the Federal Government's change in application of the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS).

I acknowledge and share the concern of petitioners regarding the Federal Government's change to the application of the ISS and ensuring access to a quality program and service.

At the end of 2012, the Department of Education, Training and Employment became aware the Australian Government had changed its practice in administering the ISS which assists eligible children with disability at long day care services. The changed practice excludes ISS funding for children in long day care services who are participating in a state-funded kindergarten program, leaving a gap in service support for these vulnerable children. Previously, children with disability could attend a long day care service and participate in a funded kindergarten program with ISS funded supports.

The Federal Government claims that there has been no change in content or administration of the Guidelines. However, it is clear there has been a change to exclude kindy-aged children from ISS support. A fact attested to by the raising of this petition, and the number of services and families that have contacted my office and the Department detailing the distressing impact on parents, children and staff at long day care services.

I have raised this matter on multiple occasions with The Honourable Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood, Child Care and Youth and appealed for her to re-consider her position on the application of the ISS in order to support children with disability.

Minister Ellis has since confirmed that long day care services are eligible to apply for ISS outside the hours of the kindergarten program for which the child may additionally attend the service. This approach requires services to identify their program delivery arrangements to assist in determining their eligibility for ISS. My Department is communicating on a one-to-one basis about options available to families and children.

The Queensland Government has a strong record of providing inclusion support to kindergarten services that are unable to access the Australian Government's Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and the ISS. Children with disability accessing a kindergarten program in a kindergarten service can access the Queensland Government's Disability Support Funding (DSF) Program.

The Queensland Government implements the DSF Program in kindergarten services to complement the support provided to children in long day care services under the Inclusion Support Program. The DSF program cannot be expanded to apply to the hours of the kindergarten program in the long day care sector without significant and unnecessary administrative burden for services and families.

Queensland has strived to achieve targets under the National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education and will continue to do so under the new National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, and is committed to supporting the inclusion of vulnerable children.

I would like to thank petitioners for raising this important matter with me.

I encourage concerned and impacted families and services to contact the Professional Support Coordinator Queensland on 1800 112 585 for disability support options available to them. Alternatively, services can contact the Department's Kindy Hotline on 1800 56439 for further information and advice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Langbroek', with a horizontal line underneath.

JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK MP
Minister for Education, Training and Employment

Ref: 13/271882