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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



CHAPTER BRIEFING No. 6

GOVERNMENT REPORT INTO DECKAS FUNDING MEMBERS INPUT VITAL

Dear Colleagues

As previously advised, the report from Allen Consulting Group regarding the DECKAS funding review has been released. The consultation period for this report will close on September 28th 2007.

The full Allen Consulting Group Report will be available online.

You will have recently received a briefing about the upcoming Regional Organising Committee meetings which are being held to give QIEU members the opportunity to provide their feedback on the report. QIEU members can also provide feedback on the report by completing the attached survey.

Below you will find a summary of the models that have been presented in the Allen Consulting Group report. Attached is some more in depth information about the proposed models and the QIEU members survey. A copy of the full Allen Consulting Group report will be available on our website www.qieu.asn.au

Please return your completed survey no later than **MONDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2007**. Your completed survey can be faxed to (07) 3839 7021 or posted at no charge to QIEU Reply Paid 418, Fortitude Valley Qld 4006.

Your responses to this survey will greatly assist us in making a further response to the Consultant's report and addressing the concerns of Early Childhood professionals working in Community Kindergartens throughout Queensland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. A. Burke'.

TERRY BURKE
GENERAL SECRETARY

Information to assist in completing the QIEU Member Survey on the proposed models for the future of DECKAS funding and Community Kindergarten education

In handing down their report about DECKAS funding, the Allen Consulting Group has proposed three alternative future models in three key areas of Governance, Funding Parameters and Operational Issues. The attached documents provide an overview of the proposed models in each of these key areas.

KEY ISSUE ONE – GOVERNANCE

The first key issue of governance deals with:

- Decision makers for DECKAS and the Early Childhood sector
- Establishment, monitoring and enforcement of quality requirements for centres
- The distribution of DECKAS funding

Model 1 – An Early Childhood Education and Care Board supported by the Department Education, Training and Arts (DETA) and Department of Communities (DOCs)

This model proposes the establishment of a Board, supported by state government departments, which has responsibility for DECKAS and Early Childhood quality requirements. This model also prescribes the direct payment of funding from DETA to kindergartens. This model would require the implementation of a new board and associated structures.

Model 2 – Consolidate DECKAS and other Early Childhood responsibilities into a single government department

This model proposes the consolidation of all Early Childhood responsibilities into a single government department. Quality requirements would be prescribed in legislative regulations, removing the need for a duplication of the accreditation process. Funding would be provided directly to kindergartens from the nominated government department.

Model 3 – Modified status quo

This model proposes a continuation of the current system of governance with some alteration to existing practices. A number of government departments and organisations would have responsibility for different aspects of the sector. It is unclear how the current issues in the sector would be addressed.

KEY ISSUE TWO – FUNDING PARAMETERS

The second key issue of funding parameters deals with:

- Eligibility for DECKAS funding
- Quality, affordability and accessibility of Community Kindergarten education
- Determination of funding amounts

Model 1 – Lump sum grants for Community Kindergartens

This model proposes the retention of many of the current systems for funding eligibility, quality requirements, accessibility and affordability. This model prescribes lump sum funding based on government policy to provide a certain percentage of costs incurred by kindergartens. It is unclear how the issues of accessibility and under funding would be addressed.

Model 2 – Fund per child and regulate quality across all not-for-profit kindergartens

This model proposes the retention of the current system of eligibility for funding, but recommends that quality requirements should apply to all kindergarten programs, and affordability should be targeted to those most in need in the community. Funding is provided on a per child basis, rather than a lump sum amount.

Model 3 – DECKAS + Childcare Benefit in the profit and not-for-profit sectors

This model proposes that all kindergartens will have access to the Commonwealth Childcare Benefit and tax rebate. Recommends quality requirements for all kindergartens in both the profit and not-for-profit sectors, universal access for 3½ to 4½ year olds and affordability for all the population. DECKAS funding will be used to top up other funding, with the intention of making teachers' and assistants' conditions comparable to the school sector.

KEY ISSUE THREE – OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The third key issue of operational issues deals with:

- Funding for new Community Kindergartens
- Integration of the Community Kindergarten sector

Model 1 – New Community Kindergartens in areas with high demand and high population growth

This model proposes the funding of new Community Kindergartens in areas of high demand and projected growth for those in the 3½ to 4½ age group. This model does not recommend the integration of the Community Kindergarten sector with other Early Childhood sectors (such as long day care).

Model 2 – New Community Kindergartens in areas determined by a Needs Based Planning Resource Allocation Framework (NBPRAF)

This model proposes the funding of new Community Kindergartens in areas of high demand and need based on the Department of Communities' NBPRAF. Greater integration of Community Kindergarten and other Early Childhood sectors (such as long day care) will occur. This model raises questions of how the integration might impact on the character of education in the Community Kindergarten sector.

Model 3 – New Community Kindergartens in areas determined by integrated planning

This model proposes that funding for new Community Kindergartens would take into account existing kindergarten and long day care places. This model also promotes a fully integrated Early Childhood sector.

Consolidated preliminary options: governance

Issue to consider ...	GOVERNANCE OPTIONS		
1a. An ECEC Board supported by DETA	1b. Consolidate DECKAS and other ECEC responsibilities within a single government department	1c. Modified status quo	
<p>On-going decision making responsibility</p>	<p>Legislative and policy responsibility for early years issues, including DECKAS, is consolidated and located within a single government department - either DETA or DOCS.</p>	<p>DETA is responsible for funding DECKAS. DOCS is responsible for regulating minimum standards and monitoring those standards. C&K affiliation signals high quality and is a prerequisite to access DECKAS funding.</p>	
<p>Quality requirements</p>	<p>Regulations specify the kindergarten inputs necessary to deliver high quality programs. This removes the need for a second process such as accreditation or affiliation. All not-for-profit kindergarten programs (DECKAS funded and others) are subject to the higher regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>NCAC accreditation / affiliation requirements establish high quality requirements. DOCS establishes and monitors minimum standards in regulations.</p>	
<p>Systemic support for continuous quality improvement</p>	<p>2009-2012: C&K invited to enter an agreement to continue to provide ECECC service to community kindergartens. C&K affiliation not required to access this service.</p>	<p>2009-2012: C&K invited to enter an agreement to continue to provide ECECC service to community kindergartens. C&K affiliation is required to access this service.</p>	
<p>Quality monitoring, enforcement & reporting</p>	<p>The responsible government department (DETA or DOCS) monitors and enforces regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>Status quo roles for DETA, DOCS, C&K</p>	
<p>Funding approval and distribution</p>	<p>The responsible government department (DETA or DOCS) makes payments directly to individual kindergartens that comply with regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>DETA provides block funding to C&K for individual kindergartens. C&K then forward funding to individual kindergartens.</p>	

Consolidated preliminary options: funding parameters

Issue to consider	2a. Lump sum grants for community kindergartens	2b. Fund per child and regulate quality across all not-for-profit kindergartens	2c. DECKAS+ CCB fund in the profit & not-for-profit sectors ^(a)
<p>General funding issues</p> <p>Who is eligible to receive DECKAS funding?</p> <p>Quality, affordability, accessibility objectives</p> <p>Taking account of inherent cost differences</p> <p>Measures used to determine funding amounts</p>	<p>Status quo — existing community kindergartens. This is necessary to achieve the budget neutrality constraint.</p> <p>Quality requirements: apply to all DECKAS community kindergartens.</p> <p>Accessibility: maintain current level (30%).</p> <p>Affordability: for general population.</p> <p>Account for location (rural and remote) and structure (stand alone or network).</p>	<p>As for Option 1</p> <p>Quality requirements: apply to all kindergartens programs delivered in the not-for-profit sector.</p> <p>Accessibility: maintain current level (30%).</p> <p>Affordability: for target, in need population.</p> <p>Account for location (rural and remote), structure (stand alone or network) and small enrolments due to small populations.</p>	<p>Assumes all community kindergartens will also be eligible for Commonwealth Govt CCB and tax rebate.</p> <p>All kindergartens including not-for-profit, (Independent Schools) and for profit.</p> <p>Quality: all kindergarten programs delivered in the not-for-profit and the for-profit sectors.</p> <p>Accessibility: universal, 3½ to 4½ year olds</p> <p>Affordability: for all population.</p> <p>Account for location (rural and remote) and indigenous services.</p> <p>DECKAS funding is used to 'top up' the higher fee revenue stream from CCB. The purpose is to make teacher and assistant conditions comparable to the school sector.</p>
<p>(a) To be consistent with the project terms of reference requiring budget neutrality, this option assumes that the Commonwealth Government would provide access to CCB for sessional community kindergartens.</p>	<p>A lump sum grant <i>per kindergarten unit</i>, determined by benchmarked efficient cost. The Government's policy would be that they provide X% or more of a kindergarten's costs in support of all community kindergartens.</p>	<p>Funding on a <i>per child enrolled basis</i>. Different amounts are available depending in kindergarten characteristics.</p> <p>For any new funding, use DOCs needs based funding model to determine where funding is best directed.</p>	

Consolidated preliminary options: operational issues

Issue to consider ...	3a. New community kindergartens in areas with high demand and high population growth	3b. New community kindergartens in areas determined by Needs Based Planning Resource Allocation Framework	3c. New community kindergartens in areas determined by Integrated Planning ^(a)
Funding for new community kindergartens	Areas of high demand (child:place) and projected population growth (3.5 – 4.5 cohort only).	Areas of high need and demand (child:place) receive new funding. Using existing DOCs Needs-Based Planning Resource Allocation Framework (NBPRAF) as basis for distributing new funding.	Improved planning to better co-ordinate demand and supply, taking account of existing Kindergarten and long day care places.
Timing of recurrent funding	Grant made midway through each term.	Grant made midway through each term. As for Option 3a.	Grants made at the end of each term (status quo).
Capital funding arrangements	Continue current arrangements – DECKAS providing capital funding and responding to applications presented by individual kindergartens on an as needs basis.	Continue current arrangements – DECKAS providing capital funding and responding to applications presented by individual kindergartens on an as needs basis. As for Option 3a.	Propose changes necessary to allow community organisations to access capital markets Access direct capital grants from the Commonwealth Government.
What happens if there is a dispute?	Decisions about quality and funding are subject to standard departmental complaints processes.	There are standard departmental complaints processes in place to manage any concerns raised about quality or funding processes or decisions.	With respect to quality and funding: there appear to be few avenues for complaint.
Integration	Provides for more consistent administration of DECKAS. Does not achieve a more integrated ECEC sector within Queensland. ECEC retains its direct link with DETA, consistent with national trend.	Provides for most consistent administration of DECKAS. Achieves a more integrated ECEC sector within Queensland by bringing all quality requirements into regulations.	No improvements to the administration of DECKAS. Achieves a more integrated ECEC sector by promoting the same quality requirements for all kindergarten.

(a) To be consistent with the project terms of reference requiring budget neutrality, this option assumes that the Commonwealth Government would provide access to CCB for seasonal community kindergarten.



QIEU DECKAS FUNDING REVIEW

Member Survey

September 2007

**QIEU Member Survey on the proposed models for the future of
DECKAS funding and Community Kindergarten education.**

Name

Centre

Date

Please return this survey to the QIEU Office by Monday 24th September 2007
Fax (07) 3839 7021 or post to QIEU, Reply Paid 418, Fortitude Valley Qld 4006

Question 1 - System of Governance

1a. Which of the following models do you believe would provide the best system of governance for the interests of the Community Kindergarten sector?

- An Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Board supported by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts.
- Consolidation of DECKAS and other Early Childhood and care responsibilities within a single state government department.
- Retain the current system of a number of state government departments and C&K taking responsibility for Early Childhood education and care.

1b. Why do you believe the model you have selected is the best system of governance for the Community Kindergarten sector?

1c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 2 - Distribution of Funding

2a. Which of the following models do you believe would provide the best system for the distribution of funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

- The Department of Education, Training and the Arts makes payments directly to individual kindergartens in accordance with decisions of the ECEC Board.
- The state government department responsible for Early Childhood education and care makes payments directly to kindergartens that comply with regulatory requirements.
- The Department of Education, Training and the Arts provides block funding to C&K for individual kindergartens. C&K then forward this funding to individual kindergartens.

2b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected would provide the best system for the distribution of funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

2c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 3 – Determination of Funding

3a. Which of the following models do you believe would provide the best system for the determination of funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

- A lump sum grant per kindergarten unit. That is, the government would provide funding for a certain percentage of costs to all community kindergartens.
- Funding based on the number of children enrolled at the centre. The amount would depend on the specific characteristics of the kindergarten, with the needs based funding model used for any new funding.
- DECKAS funding used to top up the higher fee revenue stream from the Childcare Benefit. The purpose is to make teacher and assistant conditions comparable to the school sector.

3b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is the best system for the determination of funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

3c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 4 – Eligibility for DECKAS Funding

4a. Which of the following models do you believe would provide the best practice for the eligibility of DECKAS funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

- As per the current arrangement - existing Community Kindergartens are eligible for DECKAS funding.
- Assumes all community kindergartens will be eligible for the Childcare Benefit and tax rebate. All kindergartens including not-for-profit (Independent Schools) and for profit are eligible for DECKAS funding.

4b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is the best practice for the eligibility of DECKAS funding in the Community Kindergarten sector?

4c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other model?

Question 5 – Quality, Affordability and Accessibility

5a. Which of the following models do you believe would provide the best system for quality, affordability and accessibility in the Community Kindergarten sector?

- Quality requirements apply to all DECKAS community kindergartens. Accessibility is retained at the current level of 30%, and affordability for the general population.
- Quality requirements apply to all kindergarten programs delivered in the not-for-profit sector. Accessibility is retained at the current level of 30% and affordability targets for those most in need within the community.
- Quality requirements apply to all kindergarten programs delivered in the not-for-profit and the for-profit sectors. Universal access for 3½ to 4½ year olds and affordability for all the population.

5b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is the best system for quality, affordability and accessibility in the Community Kindergarten sector?

5c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 6 – Quality Accreditation Requirements

6a. Which of the following models do you believe would be in the best interests for achieving the highest quality of education in the Community Kindergarten sector?

- The ECEC Board establishes accreditation requirements for Community Kindergartens. To receive DECKAS funding, Community Kindergartens would have to meet these accreditation requirements.
- Quality requirements stipulated in regulations, removing the need for a second accreditation/affiliation process. All not-for-profit kindergarten programs are subject to the higher regulatory requirements.

Third option on the following page

- A system which includes; accreditation with the National Childcare Accreditation Council to provide access to the Childcare Benefit, C&K accreditation/affiliation requirements and the establishment and monitoring of minimum regulation standards by the Department of Communities.

6b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is in the best interests for achieving the highest quality of education in the Community Kindergarten sector?

6c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 7 – Integration of Community Kindergartens
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7a. Which of the following models do you believe would be in the best interests of Community Kindergarten sector?

- More consistent administration of DECKAS and the retention of the individual character of Community kindergartens as a result of no integration with long day care services.
- More consistent administration of DECKAS and integration of the Early Childhood education and care sector within Queensland by brining all quality requirements into regulations.
- No change to the administration of DECKAS, but a more integrated Early Childhood education and care sector by promoting the same quality requirements for all kindergartens.

7b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is in the best interests of the Community Kindergarten sector?

7c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?

Question 8 – Establishment of new Community Kindergartens

8a. Which of the following models do you believe would be in the best interests of the future of the Community Kindergarten sector?

- Establishment of new Community Kindergartens in areas with high demand and projected population growth among 3½ to 4½ year olds.
- Establishment of new Community Kindergartens in areas of high need and demand (based on a child: place ratio) using the Department of Communities’ Needs-Based Planning Resource Allocation Framework (NBPRAF).
- Establishment of new Community Kindergartens in areas determined by integrated planning which take into account, supply, demand and existing kindergartens and long day care places.

8b. Why do you believe that the option you have selected is in the best interests of the future of the Community Kindergarten sector?

8c. What strengths (if any) and weaknesses can you identify in the other two models?
