

Dodgy childcare centres named and shamed ^[1]

Parents can now look up shonky childcare centres thanks to a new government website naming and shaming offenders.

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EXCERPTS

CHILDCARE centres caught out rorting taxpayer subsidies and committing other rule breaches have been listed on a public national shame register.

Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham said dodgy operators now had nowhere to hide.

“This register should serve as a warning to providers that if you’re non-compliant and do the wrong thing you will be hung out to dry,” Senator Birmingham said.

In 2016-17, the Education Department issued 141 sanctions and immediate cancellations of taxpayer subsidies.

Almost 40 others were caught out for wrongdoing in the first quarter of the 2017-18 financial year. The majority of cases involved family day care services, with fraud being the most common breach.

“We don’t want dodgy individuals looking after Australian children,” he said.

The government carried out 3800 compliance checks in 2016-17.

Parents can view the Child Care Enforcement Action Register at www.education.gov.au/child-care-enforcement-action-register ^[3].

Labor has welcomed the register but said it did nothing to help the 279,000 Australian families who will be worse off under the Liberals’ new childcare changes.

The Turnbull Government’s new child care package is due to kick off on 2 July and will also provide additional compliance powers to crack down on rorters.

The new package will allow a family earning less than \$65,000 a year to have 85 per cent of their child care bills paid for by taxpayers.

But it has been criticised for hitting lower income families as parents will have to work, study or volunteer for at least eight hours a fortnight to get the maximum benefit.

It’s been estimated that those earning less than \$65,710 a year will get reduced subsidies.

The government has defended the package and Mr Birmingham said it would provide an extra \$2.5 billion investment and nearly one million families were set to benefit.

“A working family on \$50,000 a year with two children in care three days a week at \$100 a day will be around \$3380 better off each year,” Mr Birmingham said.

“That same family earning \$150,000 a year would be around \$1040 better off a year, and if they were earning \$94,000 with the children in care two days a week, they’d be around \$1560 better off a year.

“We know that affordable childcare is essential for some families to work the hours they want and the days that suit them, which is why we’re targeting support to low and middle income, hardworking families.”

Between the March 2016 and 2017 quarters, Mr Birmingham said there had been a 3.1 per cent increase in the numbers of children attending approved early education and care services.

He said the Turnbull Government’s actions to date had helped slow fee growth to 3.9 per cent, including 4 per cent for long day care, the second-lowest increases in the last decade.

“After a decade of annual average fee increases of 6.7 per cent and 14.6 per cent spikes under Labor, we know how tough some families are finding the cost of early education and care,” he said.

“I encourage families to visit our savings estimator at www.education.gov.au/childcare ^[4] so they can see exactly what our changes mean

for them and their budgets.”

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