

# Libs seeks to claw back childcare millions <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

The Abbott government has ordered a month-long review of whether it can claw back \$300 million allocated by Labor for pay rises in the childcare industry.

Assistant Minister for Education Sussan Ley has set a deadline of the end of next month for an independent report on whether the government is obliged to pay out the \$300m Early Youth Quality Fund.

Many childcare providers given conditional offers on staff pay rises, before the Rudd government went into caretaker mode, have already told workers they will receive the increases, raising the threat of a class action if they are not passed on.

The minister will today also announce meetings with state and territory ministers to improve the implementation of the industry-governing National Quality Framework. "The issues to discuss will include considering whether we need to extend the deadline for staff training in light of a severe shortage of qualified personnel and whether the implementation of staff-to-child ratios can be slowed," Ms Ley said.

Ms Ley said the independent review of the \$300m Early Youth Quality Fund was promised in response to concerns raised by many providers in the sector about inequities in the fund.

"It fulfils our election promise to examine the EYQF's implementation process, taking into account allegations it was used to push childcare centres into enterprise bargaining agreements and boost union membership."

The review will consider the process by which the fund was established, including legislative and governance arrangements, the experience of the early childhood education and care sector and the views of the fund's advisory board.

It will also look at the submissions made to two parliamentary inquiries into the Early Years Quality Fund Special Account Bill 2013.

The Abbott government faces having to spend all of the \$300m promised by Labor to increase the wages of childcare workers or face legal challenges by up to 85 providers that have been given conditional funding offers.

The Weekend Australian has learnt that all of the \$300m included in the May budget has been promised to childcare providers, although only about 15 contracts have been signed.

-reprinted from the Australian

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