

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 4 of 2025 House of Assembly

Asked By: Ms Anita Dow MP

Answered By: Hon Jo Palmer MLC

The petitioners call on the State Government to:-

- 1) Review the decision of the Education and Care Unit in relation to dual-educator Family Day Care services in Tasmania and allow for the two services to continue operating as FDCs.
- 2) Support innovative FDC models in regional and remote communities where these opportunities exist to overcome the critical lack of access to early childhood education and care.

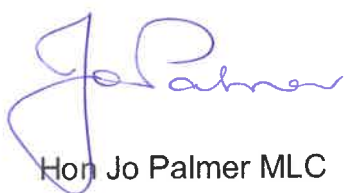
GOVERNMENT POSITION

To overcome constraints currently brought by National Law, the Tasmanian Government is actively investigating scope for a state-based solution, while advocating for a national solution that enables continuity of care for Tasmanian families, stability for educators and the highest standards of safety and wellbeing for children. The highest priority for the Government and the Education and Care Unit in relation to our Early Childhood Education and Care sector is always safety and wellbeing.

RESPONSE:

- I note the petition *Protect Critical Family Day Care Services in Braddon* raised by Ms Natalie Wall, sponsored by Ms Anita Dow, MP.
- Family day care services are vital in supporting families and providing employment for educators, and highly valued in their communities.
- The Education and Care Unit (ECU) as Tasmania's Regulatory Authority administers the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*, and the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (NQF)*, which ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children.
- I understand two dual-educator model services - where two family-day-care educators provide care from the same residence - are currently operating in Tasmania. This is not compliant with the National Law, determined at Federal level.

- As State Minister for Education in Tasmania, I have had discussions with the Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education Hon Dr Anne Aly MP to find a permanent solution. These discussions are ongoing. On 6 March I formally wrote to Dr Aly seeking her support to attain a solution.
- In the meantime, a temporary waiver has been granted by the ECU to allow continued operation of the two affected family day-care facilities, while each is working towards compliance. This ensures continuity of care for families, and stability for educators, while maintaining the highest standards of safety and wellbeing for children.
- Educators are being supported to transition to compliant models, either as single educators within family day care services or as part of long day care (centre-based) models.
- On 16 December 2024, I brought together stakeholders to clarify issues, explore solutions, and commit to practical outcomes for children and families. In-principle agreements have now been reached with both providers.
- The Tasmanian Government is acutely aware of our need for childcare, and the benefits availability brings to our economy, families and in particular, women. The government continues to work with the childcare sector, the Department, and the Federal Government to improve access.
- The Tasmanian Liberal Government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future includes commitments such as:
 - \$32 million to deliver four new supersized Child and Family Learning Centres.
 - \$10 million over four years to support schools to establish new onsite Outside School Hours Care facilities.
 - \$5 million for an Early Years Workforce Development Fund.
- The Government has also completed an audit of government land to support the expansion of ECEC services. The ECEC sector will be invited to respond to a EOI invitation to provide services on government land, in May 2025



Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Minister for Education

Date: 27.3.25