

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW (WA) AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Second Reading

Resumed from 26 June.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [9.40 pm]: In the time available to me, I do not know whether I can match our performance on the previous bill. Perhaps that was a warm-up for this one! I want to register at the outset the state Parliamentary Liberal Party's support for the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Amendment Bill 2018. By way of explanation, this bill amends the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012 and the Education and Care Services National Law contained as a schedule to that act. We have reached this point today because of amendments to that national law reflecting reforms to the national quality framework governing this sector and identified as part of the 2014 review of the national partnership agreement driven by the ministerial Education Council. In brief, a decision to implement a range of largely operational and technical reforms was made by that ministerial council of education ministers on 31 January 2017, the eve of the last state election.

As I have mentioned, these reforms are largely technical in nature, but some key themes merit attention. The amendments improve oversight of and support for educators engaged by family day care services. By way of some explanation, and citing the explanatory memorandum, at least one crucial element of that attracted my attention; that is, these reforms go some way to ensuring that approved providers of family day care services engage a minimum number of family day care coordinators based on the number of family day care educators at that particular service. By way of briefing, I am given to understand that that ratio will now be one coordinator to every 15 educators. I think the present standard is something like a ratio of one to 25. I was curious to know whether bringing that ratio closer to one would incur any cost impost on providers and whether that was administratively difficult. I have been advised, and I am content, that that largely reflects industry practice today. I doubt very much that more than a small proportion of family day care providers would find reaching that ratio particularly difficult as an undertaking.

These amendments also make approved providers responsible for ensuring that only fit and proper persons with suitable skills to perform the role are appointed as nominated supervisors. I must confess that when I looked at that, I thought that that would have been the case to begin with. Obviously, that is not the case, and I am somewhat satisfied that this is a step in the right direction.

As I mentioned, this is a largely technical and operational set of amendments worthy of some investigation, but perhaps not right now. But I also note that there are consequential amendments foreshadowed as a consequence of these amendments that will flow through to the Spent Convictions Act 1988 and the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004. I will seek the minister's advice, in her reply, to follow precisely what those consequential amendments actually contain.

I look at the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Amendment Bill 2018 from three distinct but overlapping lenses. The first is as a parent with a child enrolled in a family day care centre; the second is from the perspective of policy desirability; and the third is the process being followed and the legislative rightness of the bill as presented to the house for its consideration.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.