

Author name: D. Wilde

Date of submission: Tuesday, 7 November 2023

Your submission for this review:

The early childhood Start Strong Affordable Preschool Funding model is extremely and unnecessarily complex, changes regularly without much sector consultation and without much advance information. Despite being advised by the DoE that funding information would arrive in term 3 this year it was not released until part way through Term 4 and we still (Week 5 of the Term) do not have the full information and funding calculator. This is problematic for trying to develop budgets, set fees and advise 2024 families. Ideally as a service we should be able to develop a 2-5 year budget and financial plan however with changes to the model happening each year it is impossible to plan ahead. I have been advised that now I will need to complete a Deloitte Audit despite completing this 3 years ago. I have no problem with the audit, public money needs to be audited and from our last audit we had no compliance issues however the timing of the audit is far from ideal. I have been told that I will receive further information in December and that the audit will need to be completed by the end of Feb 2024. This is the busiest time of the year as we finalise 2024 enrolments, orientate children and families to the service, finish of a wonderful year with our current children and families, support transition to school for those children leaving, write HLSN funding applications for 2024, meet with 2024 children and families. Then we have 4 weeks annual leave. When preschool returns at the start of February 2024 our focus is on settling children and families to our service for the first few weeks, time in the office is limited. From my prior experience collecting and preparing all of the documentation needed for the audit is a laborious process. Please consider running funding audits in Terms 2 and 3. Please also consider more sector engagement in the development of funding models from year to year.