**EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER REGISTRATION - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. *What is the benefit of registration for early childhood teachers and providers of early childhood education programs?*

* The reform will deliver the following benefits for early childhood teachers:
  + recognition as teaching professionals;
  + application of the provisional registration to “full” registration process, which has been shown to support the transition of new teachers to professional practice; and
  + reduced regulatory burden under some provisions of the Education and Care Services National Law (**ECSNL**) for example, registered teachers are taken to be fit and proper to be supervisors of education and care services (in the absence of evidence to the contrary).
* The reform will deliver the following benefits for providers of early childhood education programs:
  + confirmation that a person is registered in the proposed early childhood division will be confirmation that the person has approved early childhood teaching qualifications and has undergone the required criminal record checks;
  + teachers will be subject to a transparent disciplinary framework so that a teacher who has been found to be guilty of misconduct or serious incompetence while engaged by one provider cannot simply be engaged by another provider who has no knowledge of the concerns regarding the teacher’s performance;
  + teachers will be subject to ongoing Victorian police record checks; and
  + all teachers will be subject to continuing professional development requirements, with consequent positive benefits for teacher quality in the early childhood sector.
* The reform will deliver the following benefits for parents and the community:
  + early childhood teachers will become mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse, consistent with community expectations of early intervention in such cases and recommendations contained in the Government’s Protecting Vulnerable Children Inquiry (**Cummins Report**);
  + teachers will be subject to a transparent disciplinary framework so that a teacher who has been found to be guilty of misconduct or serious incompetence while engaged by one provider cannot simply be engaged by another provider who has no knowledge of the concerns regarding the teacher’s performance;
  + teachers will be subject to ongoing Victorian police record checks;
  + teachers will be subject to continuing professional development requirements; and
  + parents are expected to enjoy increased confidence in the quality of teachers delivering early childhood education programs.
* The reform will support the Government’s vision of:
  + a highly skilled professional early childhood workforce able to meet future challenges;
  + improving teacher performance via professional development with consequential benefits for children’s social and educational progress;
  + protecting the most vulnerable children and families in Victorian society;
* The reform is supported by all peak bodies in the early childhood sector including Early Learning Association Australia, Municipal Association of Victoria, Early Childhood Australia (Victorian Branch), Australian Education Union and the Victorian Independent Education Union.

1. *When will registration commence and which early childhood educators will be required to be registered?*

* Registration is scheduled to commence on 30 September 2015 (30 September is the common annual registration renewal date for teachers).
* All early childhood teachers (qualified early childhood teachers employed or engaged in the role of an early childhood teacher) will be required to be registered to be eligible to be employed in Victoria in the role of an early childhood teacher unless they fall within a limited exemption:
* Those persons taken to be early childhood teachers under regulation 242 (which has a temporary operation) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations (**ECSNR**); and
* A very small number of persons who are employed in a service that has been granted a waiver under the ECSNL or an exemption under the Children’s Services Regulations 2009 will not be required to be registered by the VIT, but will be required to hold an approval to teach issued by the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training (the Department).

1. *What are the key features of the registration model for early childhood teachers?*

Up to this point registration has applied only to teachers who worked in schools, or delivered curriculum to children of school age. School teachers are currently registered under Part 2.6, Division 3 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (ETR Act)*. The *ETR Act* has been changed to provide for registration of early childhood teachers. The key features of the model are summarised below:

* All early childhood teachers will be registered in a separate early childhood division of the teacher register (Division 3A: ‘Early Childhood Teachers’) under Part 2.6 of *ETR Act*. Registration of early childhood teachers in Division 3A will assist employers to identify when a teacher has an approved early childhood teaching qualification.
* Only those teachers who have approved early childhood teaching qualifications, or are taken to have approved early childhood teaching qualifications for the purposes of the ECSNR*,* will be eligible to be registered in the early childhood division (Division 3A).
* It will be possible for a teacher to hold two registrations. To be eligible for dual registration a teacher must have the qualifications required by both Division 3 and 3A.
* A small number of persons without approved early childhood teaching qualifications will be able to teach (or continue teaching) in a service that has a relevant waiver or exemption under relevant laws. The Department is responsible for managing the system of waivers and exemptions and will also have responsibility for granting “temporary approvals to teach” to persons who do not have approved early childhood teaching qualifications and exemptions to the services employing them (see below).
* In limited circumstances (i.e. when a service has a relevant waiver or exemption), persons without early childhood teaching qualifications may perform the role of early childhood teacher if granted a “temporary approval to teach” by the Secretary of the Department. The service employing them will also require an exemption from the Secretary of the Department.
* Approval of early childhood teaching qualifications will continue to be the responsibility of the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (**ACECQA**). The VIT will apply the qualifications approved or recognised by ACECQA when undertaking a qualifications assessment for an applicant for registration in the early childhood division.

1. *Why is there a separate division of the teacher register for registering early childhood teachers?*

* The VIT’s current qualifications requirements applying to school teachers are a four year teaching degree, which includes the requisite practicum for teaching in schools (supervised teaching experience).
* ACECQA’s current qualifications requirements applying to early childhood teachers include both four year and three year teaching degrees, which include the requisite practicum for teaching in an early childhood service.
* The establishment of a separate division for registration of early childhood teachers ensures that the different qualifications requirements currently applying to school teachers and early childhood teachers are maintained.
* Teachers who wish to work in both schools and early childhood settings will need to have the appropriate qualifications (approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the VIT for schools and approved by ACECQA for early childhood settings) and be registered under both the current Division 3 of Part 2.6 of the ETRA as well as under the new Early Childhood Division (second registration).

1. *Who will approve qualifications for early childhood teachers?*

* Education and care services in Victoria, which include long day care, family day care and preschool programs, are regulated by the **ECSNL**. Other services including occasional care services are regulated by the Victorian *Children’s Services Act 1996*.
* In order to be an early childhood teacher under the ECSNL, a person must have an early childhood teaching qualification approved by ACECQA (or be taken to have an approved early childhood teaching qualification).
* It is important that only one authority has responsibility for approving qualifications for teachers. For school teachers in Victoria this responsibility resides with the Minister on the recommendation of the VIT. For early childhood teachers the responsibility for approving qualifications resides with ACECQA. For the purposes of registration the VIT will verify that applicants for registration in the early childhood division have an ACECQA approved qualification.

1. *What arrangements will apply to currently employed early childhood teachers due to commence registration on September 30, 2015?*

Currently employed early childhood teachers will be registered under transitional arrangements. To be eligible for registration under transitional arrangements, an early childhood teacher will need to:

* have an ACECQA approved early childhood teaching qualification; and
* be employed or engaged as an early childhood teacher on 30 September 2015, or have been employed or engaged as an early childhood teacher at any time in the two years prior to 30 September 2015; and
* make an application for registration from 30 March 2015.

The transitional provisions will enable early childhood teachers with recent employment history as an early childhood teacher to be determined to have met the professional practice requirements for registration. The transitional process will require teachers to apply to the VIT for registration. This application will involve:

* Provision of personal information (name, address, email, /evidence of employment as an early childhood teacher within the previous two years) to the Institute , which will enable verification of eligibility for registration under transitional provisions;
* Provision of evidence of early childhood teacher qualifications to the VIT, which will be checked against the ACECQA list of approved qualifications;
* Provision of consent to a National Criminal History Check (also referred to as a National Police History Check), including certified copies of the ID required by CrimTrac (the agency which undertakes the check on behalf of the Institute);
* Payment of a registration fee (expected to be approx. $91 in 2015); and
* Provision of any additional information that may be required by the VIT under the ETR Act.

1. *Why do currently employed early childhood teachers have to apply for registration? Why can’t they simply be ‘deemed’ to be registered without an application process?*

* Legislation requires that teachers meet (rather than be ‘deemed’ to meet) several requirements:
* The VIT must verify that all early childhood teachers who are to be registered have a teaching qualification approved by ACECQA; and
* The VIT must ensure that all teachers who are to be registered have a satisfactory National Criminal History Check undertaken through the Institute. This check requires teachers to provide their signed consent to undergo the check and to provide certified identification.
* Currently employed early childhood teachers need to apply for registration so that the VIT can verify their qualifications, ensure the teacher has a satisfactory criminal history check and to collect relevant personal contact information for purposes including future renewal of registration.

1. *What are the costs involved in becoming registered?*

* The costs to early childhood teachers of registration are:
  + Initial registration fee for teachers eligible for registration under the transitional provisions is expected to be approximately $91;
  + Initial registration fee for new teachers with Victorian qualifications applying for registration from 1 October 2015 is expected to be approximately $120;
  + National Criminal History Check required for initial registration and every five years thereafter. The cost of the National Criminal History Check undertaken through the VIT will be approximately $52;
  + Early childhood teachers eligible for registration under the transitional provisions on 30 September 2015 will have the cost of their first National Criminal History Check undertaken through the Institute waived under an agreement between the Department and the VIT;
  + The cost of a second registration depends on the type of second resignation sought as follows:
    - Application for early childhood teacher registration (transitional provisions) – 25% of the annual registration renewal fee (approximately $23)
    - Application for early childhood teacher registration – 25% of the application fee (approximately $30)
    - Application for teacher registration (school) – 25% of the application fee (approximately $30)
  + The annual cost of the renewal of a second registration is 25% of the annual registration renewal fee (approximately $23)
* The costs to providers:
  + It is not anticipated that registration will result in any increased costs to services beyond those that may arise as a result of teachers being required to undertake 20 hours of professional development each year to maintain currency of practice requirements.
  + Continuing professional development requirements are required by the VIT, consistent with virtually all other authorities regulating professionals. The annual professional development requirement of 20 hours contributes to the teacher’s currency of practice and is one component of the annual registration renewal process.

1. *What is second registration?*

Second registration means that an eligible teacher can be registered under both Division 3 or 4 (permission to teach) in the *ETR Act* and the early childhood division (Division 3A). Eligibility for second registration will be determined by the teacher’s qualifications. The qualification requirements for both Division 3 (current VIT qualifications requirements) and Division 3A (ACECQA approved qualifications) would need to be met. Teachers with a second registration would be able to work across both school programs and kindergarten programs.

1. *If a teacher is dual qualified, does she/he have to be registered in more than one division of the teacher register?*

No. A currently employed early childhood teacher who is eligible for registration under the transitional provisions on 30 September 2015 will be registered in the Early Childhood Teacher Division of the *ETR Act*. If a registered early childhood teacher is dual qualified and wishes to be registered in both divisions (thereby enabling that teacher to teach in either an early childhood or school setting), an application for second registration can be made.

From 1 October 2015, a person with dual teaching qualifications can elect to be registered under either Division 3, or Division 3A, depending on the sector in which they intend to teach. If the person wishes to be registered in more than one division, an application for second registration can be made.

Similarly, if a currently registered dual qualified teacher in Division 3 wishes to hold registration in more than one division after 30 September 2015 an application for second registration can be made to the Institute.

1. *Why will it cost teachers more to be registered in more than one division of the teacher register?*

* There will be an additional administrative burden to the VIT to register a teacher in more than one division and to maintain these registrations thereafter. For example, the VIT will need to:
* check the teacher’s qualifications for entry into each division; and
* update a teacher’s registration status in two divisions.
* The additional cost of a second registration cannot be greater than 25% of the cost of registration in a single division.
* A system of registration in separate divisions will reduce the possibility of error when employers check that a teacher is registered and has the required qualifications for the sector and/or setting in which they will be working.

1. *Does the division in which a teacher is registered limit the sector/s in which they can be employed?*

A teacher’s qualifications determine their eligibility for employment in the school or early childhood sectors. The division of the *ETR Act* in which a teacher is registered reflects their qualifications. Any person who meets the VIT’s current qualifications requirements and is registered in Division 3 is eligible to be employed in the school sector. Any person who meets the ACECQA qualifications requirements for early childhood teachers, and is registered in the early childhood division (Division 3A) is eligible to be employed in an early childhood setting. To be eligible for employment in the school sector a teacher must generally be registered under Division 3. To be eligible for employment in the early childhood sector a teacher must generally be registered in Division 3A. A teacher who holds registration in two divisions meets the qualifications requirements for employment in either the school or early childhood sectors.

1. *Will the provisional registration process apply to early childhood teachers?*

* Currently or recently employed early childhood teachers who are eligible for registration under the transitional arrangements leading in to the commencement of registration on 30 September 2015 will be granted early childhood teacher registration, and will not need to complete the provisional to full registration process.
* Early childhood teachers who are not eligible for the transitional provisions and who apply for registration from 1 October 2015 will be provisionally registered and have to meet the proficient teacher standards to be granted early childhood teacher registration.

1. *What steps are in place to ensure that new early childhood teachers are able to complete provisional registration?*

* Provisionally registered teachers are required to demonstrate through a documented process that they have achieved the Proficient Teacher Standards. In schools, mentors support new graduates through this process.
* Current early childhood teachers who are determined to meet the Proficient Teacher standards (and granted early childhood teacher registration) will be able to act as mentors for new graduate teachers.
* Steps are being taken to ensure that the provisional registration process is appropriate for early childhood teachers in a range of settings, and that mentoring support is available.

1. *Will becoming registered mean that early childhood teachers are subject to the mandatory reporting requirements under the Children, Youth and Families Act?*

Yes. All registered teachers are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act*. The Department offers an online training program dealing with the responsibilities of teachers as mandatory reporters. This program is available to early childhood teachers. In addition, regions periodically offer training programs for teachers and education staff in relation to mandatory reporting. Early childhood teachers are encouraged to liaise with their employers in relation to attendance at such a program.

1. *Which other States in Australia require their early childhood teachers to be registered by a teacher regulatory authority?*

Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia already require their early childhood teachers to be registered. In the Northern Territory early childhood teachers working in early childhood centres associated with schools are required to be registered.

1. *What will the situation be for early childhood teachers from other States who wish to be registered in Victoria?*

* Registered teachers from other States seeking registration in Victoria may be accepted for registration by the VIT in accordance with the *Mutual Recognition Act 1992* (but will still be required to have a National Criminal History Check conducted via the VIT).
* Under the ECSNL, early childhood teacher qualifications are nationally approved. Therefore teachers with approved or recognised early childhood qualifications are able to work in other jurisdictions, subject to meeting state registration requirements.

1. *What will the situation be for Victorian early childhood teachers who wish to be registered interstate?*

* Registered teachers in Victoria will be entitled to registration in accordance with the *Mutual Recognition Act 1992* in South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

1. *Will ‘permission to teach’ (PTT) registration be available through the VIT for teaching in an early childhood setting?*

No, early childhood teachers will not be able to apply for PTT in lieu of registration:

* “Permission to teach” is a form of temporary registration currently available to persons who are determined by the VIT to have appropriate skills and experience to teach relevant to the teaching position for which they are sought and to be suitable to be a member of the teaching profession in circumstances where a school is unable to employ a qualified teacher.
* Under the ECSNL, only persons with approved early childhood teaching qualifications are early childhood teachers (subject to limited exceptions). A system of waivers and exemptions applies to enable certain other persons to work as early childhood teachers in limited circumstances.
* The Department is responsible for managing the system of waivers and exemptions that allows services to employ persons without the prescribed early childhood teaching qualifications. The Department will be responsible for issuing “temporary approvals to teach” to those people who meet the requirements for teaching in a service that has obtained the requisite waiver or exemption.