

**FAMILY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD
CARE BUDGET AND OTHER MEASURES) BILL 2008**
Second Reading

[Ms RISHWORTH](#) (Kingston) (9.10 p.m.)—I rise tonight to support the [Family Assistance Legislation Amendment \(Child Care Budget and Other Measures\) Bill 2008](#). Few investments that a government will make are more important or more rewarding than investment in early-childhood education. The previous government's underinvestment in child care and early-childhood education was a case study in their short-term approach to Australia's future. At the election, the Rudd government committed to the Australian people that they would take childcare and early-childhood education seriously. This bill is part of the government's \$2.4 billion investment in integrated early-childhood initiatives that will help build a stronger economy for Australia's future.

I regularly visit childcare centres throughout my electorate, and childcare centre managers, staff and parents collecting their children always tell me about the pressures that childcare costs are putting on family budgets. While a shortage of childcare places is a continuing problem around the nation, in some areas of my electorate after-school-care services and other childhood services have vacancies. The feedback that I am regularly given is that childcare costs are too expensive for parents to afford. This bill makes child care more affordable for families. This bill delivers on the government's commitment to increase the childcare tax rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket childcare costs. It also increases the annual cap on the rebate from just \$4,354 to \$7,500 dollars per child. Together these increases deliver significant assistance to help families make ends meet, with many families receiving an extra \$2,000 in assistance every year.

The rebate will now also be paid quarterly rather than annually. This measure has been warmly welcomed by all parents who I have spoken to in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. This means that the assistance to families will be available closer to when the out-of-pocket costs are incurred so that the pressure is eased on family budgets immediately rather than just at tax time.

Assistance with paying for child care will make it easier for more parents to participate in the workforce. Improving workforce participation spurs economic growth and will drive down inflation in the long term by increasing the productive capacity of the economy.

This government knows that, while increasing direct assistance to parents is an important part of the solution to the challenge of providing affordable child care, finding a childcare place can be difficult. In many areas, there is a dramatic shortage of quality child care and it can be very difficult for parents to find a place close to home or on the way to work. Increasing the number of available childcare places is a priority of this government, and that is why this government is committed to supporting the establishment of an extra 260 early-learning and childcare centres across the nation.

While the cost of child care has a deep impact on family budgets, caring for children is not merely a commercial arrangement between two parties. It involves the deepest of trust, and the quality of care provided is a matter of great concern for all parents. Parents have a right to know that their children are receiving the care and opportunities for early learning that they deserve. Therefore, transparency in compliance is the only option. This bill includes provisions that will permit the secretary of the department to publish information on the

department website about childcare services that have received criminal or civil sanctions for noncompliance with the scheme.

As a nation, we have a responsibility to provide young children with the best quality early-childhood services in the world. This bill makes quality child care more affordable to many Australian families, and I commend the bill to the House.