

22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2014

Dear Commissioner,

I have worked in the child care industry for the past 30 years and have been managing a community based children's centre for the past 17 years. My personal philosophy has always been that there is no profit in child care and quality care only comes from quality staff.

It is fair to say that the past 3 years have been the most challenging, stressful and tiring years of my working career. I am concerned that this will put many Directors in the position of resigning from the sector taking with them many years of experience and valuable knowledge.

I manage the service with lower numbers of children than the minimum standards and consider myself an easy going and flexible manager. The Staff have flexible working hours and their requests have always been accommodated to maintain a positive work and home life balance.

Many changes to the industry have been excellent in raising the quality of children's services and providing the families with safe, caring and educational facilities. But some have definitely caused concerns.

Rostering staff has become increasingly more difficult due to the restrictions upon us with the conditions in the modern award. It is ridiculous that if I employ a staff for 3 hours every Monday morning to cover programming in the Baby room that I am required to employ them as PPT. Children's booking are never the same from one week to the next and therefore is difficult to roster staff as far ahead as required in the award. My concern is only employing PPT staff and having no flexibility with casual staff.

The ECH Teacher requirement in my opinion is an insult to our industry. For the past 30 years the children who have either used our centre's Kindy room as an Educational facility (with Diploma qualified educators) or both our service and an outside Kindy have been more than adequately prepared for school. Families have been more than impressed with their children's Education and do not need the added ECH Teacher qualification to achieve this with the age of the children we care for. Our experience so far with unsuccessfully employing an ECH Teacher has been somewhat of a disaster. Their university degree does not prepare them for working in the child care industry under the same conditions as Diploma qualified Educators. Diploma educators are prepared in their training to care,

nurture and educate children less than 5 years! Child Care services are finding they have no choice but to make good quality Diploma qualified long term staff redundant to make way for an early childhood teacher – this is a terrible way to treat the qualified and experienced workers in our industry.

The commencement of the one term intake for children commencing school has had a huge impact on our centre. I am disappointed that child care centres do not appear to have been considered in this initiative. I have found it necessary to alter our room ages to accommodate many babies needing to commence in January once the numbers decrease in the Kindy room. It is not ideal for the children, their families and the staff to be taking on so many new children during one week but services cannot afford to stagger these enrolment. Families needing to return to work at any other time during the year are going to find it extremely difficult to find a centre with a vacancy beyond January due to children not leaving at the end of each term. Families need to return to work to generate income to pay mortgages and household expenses.

Child Care is designed to assist with the care and education of children's when the families work or study to provide them with extended opening hours so they can travel to and from work. The amount of documentation required by the Educators with the recent NQS has put a lot of pressure on the staff and sadly taking their time away from the children in order to achieve these requirements. I consistently ask myself if all of this documentation is absolutely necessary.

The government should also consider subsidising Child Care Educator's and the administration's staff's wages to enable us to be paid more adequately. If the wages truly reflected the position hold we would have a more professional industry and more likely to retain high quality staff.

I hope that some of these points have been useful to your investigations and I look forward to some adjustment in the not too distant future.

Yours sincerely

Carol White  
Director