



Productivity Commission Report

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning

The University of Notre Dame recognizes the importance of on-going conversations with Government in an effort to raise access to affordable quality childcare and, therefore, supports the Commission's inquiry into childcare and early childhood learning. As outlined in the Commission's paper, the inquiry seeks feedback on ways in which current systems can be improved, and the University of Notre Dame wishes to comment on the following key themes:

1. The contribution that access to affordable, high quality childcare can make to optimizing children's learning and development

The University of Notre Dame strongly supports the Government's investment in the early years and advocates for continued support to improve quality. It is recognised that engaging children and their families in services that provide care and education across the early years, provides the optimal circumstance for learning and development. International research, articulated by the OECD in their paper *Starting Strong II (2006)*, emphasises the long term benefits for the individual and society when investment in education and care is a priority.

2. Opportunities to improve connections and transitions across early childhood services

Creating established processes that provide for smooth transitions between home, childcare and school is fundamental to children's successful development. Engaging with families, providing opportunities for early intervention and linking families across contexts are key factors in predicting school success for children (Salazer, 2012). Funding commitments must continue to increase in these areas and Government must consider expanding on existing models of long day care centres attached to existing school sites that seek to integrate services for families.

3. The benefits and other impacts of regulatory changes in childcare over the past decade

The introduction of the *National Quality Framework* is viewed as a positive initiative aimed at raising quality across childcare and early learning. From the perspective of pre-service teacher education, the *National Quality Framework* has successfully raised the profile of the early years and graduates recognize the crucial development and learning that occurs across birth to age eight. The University of Notre Dame supports continued investment of the *National Quality Framework*. In order to attract early childhood qualified teachers to the childcare sector, Government must support the introduction of professional wages as, at this time, quality in the sector is impacted by transient teachers moving out of the childcare sector to schools due to discrepancies in pay and conditions.

The University of Notre Dame views this inquiry positively, as a means of promoting dialogue on raising the quality and affordability of childcare and early learning. The University of Notre Dame supports the recommendations made through Early Childhood Australia and looks forward to being engaged in continued conversations on the topic.

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References:

Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development, (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. OECD: Paris.

Salazar, M. (2012). Home-school collaboration for embedding individualized goals in daily routines. *Young Exceptional Children* 15(20). DOI: 10.1177/1096250612446870.