

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission
Submission response January 2014

Back ground information about the service

We are an outer regional family day care service in North Queensland and have been providing wonderful early childhood experiences for just over 20 years in a small group family day care setting. The field worker supports educators and communities, driving over 240km from the office to 4 different locations. She sees each educator at their home often and seeks out opportunities to visit at times when parents collect and drop off their children as a way of building strong relationships with them.

Below is some statistical information

[illegible]

Flexibility and Accessibility

We offer childcare 24 hours a day seven days a week in a variety of locations with qualified educators. As an approved service families are able to take full advantage of all government subsidies and rebates.

Recent anecdotal examples from the service:

A parent with specialist coaching qualifications was provided care until as late as 7:30pm. This allowed the parent to provide coaching to children in the wider community with the comfort and knowledge that her own young child was safe with the Family Day Care educator.

Two families with several children begin care at 530am several times a week with an educator in a very rural location. The children are able to rest on arrival have breakfast and prepare for their day. Primary children then catch the school bus from and to the educator's home. This arrangement has allowed a single dad to return to the workforce on a part time basis, and another family to manage and maintain their own small business.

Affordability

As a service we have not increased our family or educator levy for 2 years demonstrating our commitment to keeping this family day care service affordable for families and educators.

We have consolidated this by moving to a more affordable office location and focusing on more sustainable practices and reducing staff hours.

Government subsidies for Australian families are a vital part of maintaining affordable access to quality services.

We are unable to accurately charge fee for service when recruiting educators in isolated locations where significant travel time is required. Induction, training, monitoring and support are necessary for an educator to remain supported and confident as they learn about the family day care business. As The Approved Provider we must ensure that the recruitment process equips the educator with the necessary knowledge, skills and professional practice to draw upon, while providing care and education in an isolated environment. It is possible to provide this level of support but it is at an additional cost to the service in both resources and time. **Currently no direct funding is provided for educator recruitment though it is an area that with additional financial support more growth is possible.**

Current Legislation that allows for an educator to be recruited from one on site home visit and then visited once annually is not appropriate and potentially puts children at risk and leaves new educators vulnerable and unsupported. This is a **worrying trend** and not one that this service would implement or support as an appropriate way of cost cutting.

Is the distinction between approved care and registered care necessary?

A resounding - yes. Registered care has no monitoring, not structure and little to no accountability. Approved care is accredited, monitored and supports families and educators through any issues that may occur. It is unhelpful and confusing and in the CCB and CCR information pamphlets when they are spoken of in the same information handout for families. It also suggest similarities that do not exist.

Is there is opportunity for the CCB and CCR rebate system to be streamlined? Families often report to me frustration and confusion and waits of up to 2 hours when trying to resolve issues with accessing their entitlements of CCB and CCR. Do they need to apply for these? Or could the submission to formalise the enrolment by the service provider to the Centrelink interface generate their entitlement.

In conclusion I have demonstrated the absolute suitability for Family Day Care as a model of care that can grow and contract and move easily in direct response to the market. The costing provided are indicators of

exceptional value for the quality care, safety of children, play based education, collaborative partnerships, flexibility and affordability.

Some areas of growth and increased flexibility for the family day care model that I would like to implement include: onsite family day care (in venue) at nursing homes, small hospitals, etc. to allow parents to work and have children on site. This is especially suited to parents who work rotating shifts. This is attractive to educators who may not have a suitable home to offer care from or live far from potential clients. **Currently legislation is not supportive of this type of arrangement.**