

To the Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission,

I am making a submission to raise my concerns over access to local preschools in our immediate area of Balmain in NSW.

Three years ago I sought a place in a local preschool for my then 4 year-old daughter. I applied for a 3-day place, as she was to attend school the following year. My application was received by, and rejected by, KU-Phoenix, Birchgrove Preschool, and Rozelle Public School. I was told I was out of the catchment areas for both Rozelle and Birchgrove. I did not secure a place at KU Phoenix due to waitlist demand. We were accepted into a preschool in Glebe where we attended as part of their three-day program.

I have subsequently learnt of a number of local children who took up positions at more than one centre, concurrently. Both placements were government funded with daily fees that were significantly less than that of local child-care centers.

I am also aware of a child who currently attends both Birchgrove Preschool on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and then attends KU Phoenix on Thursday and Friday. This concerns me because access to local preschool places is very difficult in our area and when families occupy more than one position it simply isn't fair. Somebody misses out.

My daughter struggled to settle into her first year of school. Apart from her cousin, she knew no one in her year and did not have the reassurance of familiar friends or the existing relationships her peers had built up as a result of their time in preschool. Being part of a local community, accessing local preschool places is about far more than the convenience of being able to walk to the centre or not having to pay for a place in a child-care setting. It is about building networks, a sense of community, and relationships that set children up for successful transition to the first year of school.

If an online register was to be established that tracked the placement of children in local pre-school it would make it easier to see how families were using pre-school places. It may also mean that more families could participate in pre-school programs if 'double-dipping' was identified and addressed.

I hope you will consider my suggestion and discuss how to provide more equitable and transparent access to local pre-school places.

Kind regards,

Kathryn Trippe