

Looking at the “Scope of the Enquiry” I would like to address 2 areas in particular.

A. Item 1.b. “Optimising children’s learning and development”

I feel much of the scope of the enquiry involves, cost, accessibility and associated financial considerations but in doing so is perhaps neglecting a greater opportunity to review the status of early childhood learning in Australia.

The industry, educational philosophy and research are all constantly reiterating that the “early years of a child’s education are the most important” yet it appears all levels of government fail to address the funding and provision issues of same, giving a disproportional emphasis to education in the latter years of primary and secondary education. If we wish to “optimise children’s learning and development” then the provision of early childhood education should be the pivotal area of our education philosophy and practise.

Such a revision would require a major readdressing of the industry structure and require political wherewithal, however, the current review presents the opportunity to optimise outcomes and if it concentrates on cost and accessibility it will be an opportunity lost rather than achieve a major review to optimise children’s learning and development. By looking at cost, childcare type and associated financial constraints the process is top heavy and should be built from the base up rather than top down.

B. Item 2.b. “The particular needs of rural, regional and remote parents”

The present system of mobile services providing services to outlying communities requires special funding and creative implementation. Funding through a fee for service approach will not produce equity where communities do not have the numbers of children to sustain a children’s service according to present funding formulas.

A revised system would require a restructuring of the industry based on an agreement to provide the service to those rural, regional and remote parents. This may be a contracted service - outcomes based to providing the service pivotal on achieving educational outcomes to children and parents on the understanding that a cost fee for service cannot be applicable. It needs to be an accepted given that the dollar per head cost would be greater than at major regional centres, cities etc. Such is the nature of our large land mass and dispersed population.