

Productivity Commission Submission for Ipswich Family Day Care

Our Family Day Care service has been operating for over thirty years in Ipswich and surrounding areas. We cater for over 50 educators providing education and care for over 300 hundred children and their families. Ipswich has many childcare centres and Kindergartens but many families choose Family Day Care for their children. The reasons include:

Flexibility

Ipswich Family Day Care Educators cater for the flexible care needs of working families. As well as regular day time care we have educators who care for children overnight, for shift workers, and emergency services personnel. Educators accommodate families with early 4am/5am starts and late night care depending on the family's care needs. Weekend care is also available.

Quality Care

Our educators have embraced the National Quality Framework and Ipswich Family Day Care received "Exceeding National Quality Standards" in 2013.

The Certificate III requirement for educators has had a positive impact on the professionalism of educators in our service and quality of care for the children and their families.

Accessibility

Over the past years we have had a number of new Family Day Care Educator applicants from Childcare Centre backgrounds choosing to be Family Day Care educators when they begin to have their own families. They are able to utilize their extensive experience, remain in the workforce and provide childcare and education for other children and their families. We believe that funding for startup costs for Educators would be a workforce/cost effective solution for boosting accessibility to affordable quality care.

Affordability

Parents pay an hourly fee in Family Day Care. This enables parents who do not require the longer 12 hour days (as in a childcare centre) access to a more cost effective options of e.g. three 8 hour days. Families are then more often able to stay under 50 hour Child Care Benefit threshold. Parents are not then paying for care hours that they are not using and Childcare benefit is not being paid for time children aren't in care.

Children with Additional needs

Family Day Care has the ability to provide great opportunities for children with additional needs.

- With ratios of 1 educator to four children (or 1 to 3 in the case of an educator receiving an Inclusion support subsidy for a child with a disability)
- children benefit from a more personal, stable and secure environment extremely important for children with additional needs who often do not cope well with change
- Educators are able to work closely with parents and other professionals
- the gains they make in their development in their earliest years provides a strong foundation for their future development, and for many potentially less government support required in the long term.

Kindy Access

At present there is no approved Kindy model that Family Day Care schemes and educators can access. Qld Distance Education's new e-kindy program is offered to parents who cannot access an approved kindy Program for their children. Funding for schemes to employ a four year trained teacher who could facilitate an e-kindy type program that was delivered by Certificate III qualified educators would allow these children access as well.

Due to their family experience many parents choose Family Day Care over Kindy for their child due to:

- works hours not being flexible for shorter kindy hours and unavailability of before and after Kindy childcare and as a result their 4 year olds are unable to access an approved Kindy program.
- A Family Day Care multiage environment of four children is often more suited to some children's individual needs.
- Families choose Family Day Care as their children may not settle in a large Childcare/Kindy group, and for some of the younger cohort the security and resilience skills gained in a smaller responsive environment better prepares them for their first Prep school year.
- Children with developmental delays or concerns who may have a diagnosis or those who are in a diagnosis process benefit from more individualized attention in a smaller environment. The extra year of maturity will give them a better chance in Prep.

Family Day Care in Australia needs more government recognition and support.

Family Day Care

- offers children and their families' flexible, accessible and affordable childcare.
- it is a quality childcare option with an education and care environment that provides a strong foundation for children.
- allows for many women with their own young children to participate in the workforce as well as offering childcare to other families.

Family Day Care is a model of childcare that is already in place and provides many positives towards the Productivity Commissions dual focus of education and care and workforce participation and with future recognition and support can continue to offer greater outcomes for children, their families and the workforce.