

Productivity Commission

Puddleducks Play to Learn is a privately owned 60 place Child Care Centre. We have a relatively low turnover of staff. The staff in our Centre have experience ranging from 25 years to new recruits with the average length of time in the industry sitting at approximately 10 years.

We run a very flexible workplace with some Educators working school hours, some working split shifts and others job sharing. We find that this has been a successful tool in retaining staff that may have otherwise left the industry. Childcare is a female dominated industry who quite often have families of their own.

Professional Development opportunities, although varied and many are quite often run online during the evenings and/or over the weekends. This is wonderful to reach some Educators but people with families particularly young families, can find accessing these sessions quite difficult which can limit their opportunities to further develop their skills.

I believe that a return to “on the job” training and assessing could be a step forward in attracting and retaining Educators who may have the core skills and strengths to work in the industry but be limited by family ties and restraints to do their studies and learning whilst working full time. Presently, many Educators are coming into the industry holding their Certificate III in Child Studies without spending much time in a Centre environment to know whether their skills are suited to the job, this may also be adding to the high turnover that the industry has come to expect.

The increase in the minimum requirements for ratios and Qualifications are an improvement that has come with the new NQS and legislation, I believe that these minimum requirements are vital in retaining quality of care to children and to wind these back in anyway would impact on the level of care that children are currently receiving.

We are fortunate enough to have one of our current Educators able to begin her Early Childhood Qualification. Keeping and retaining Early Childhood Teachers has put additional stress on the industry – particularly in an area where response to advertisements can be extremely limited (in some cases non-existent) in both quality and quantity. To replace existing quality staff who may have had 20+ years in the industry with an Early Childhood Teacher who in some instances may have no experience in the Early Childhood sector, for us, is a very difficult transition to make. I then have to question – Will an early childhood teacher make a difference in delivering a quality program?

With the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework, NQS and changes to legislation, the industry has made many steps forward to ensure that children and outcomes for children, are the focus of the industry but the amount of paperwork that this has created can have an impact on the amount of quality time that Educators are able to spend with the children. There is an expectation that programming will be completed daily. Perhaps further guidance on how to minimise paperwork to gain maximum effect would be helpful.

Working with the NQF has played a huge part in achieving quality by creating a guide for Educators and centres to follow, keeping an overall expectation for both ensuring quality care is given and maintained. The EYLF has introduced a new element to childcare that has enhanced both the children’s wellbeing and the motivation and enthusiasm to be returned to many Educators. The introduction of critical reflections allows the opportunity for Educators to spend time celebrating the success of their day and to be able to address any areas that may need improvement allowing new ways for Educators to ensure that child input is part of the daily planning and to have a better understanding of when changes may be needed or when things are working well.