

Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning

FROM
SCHOOL'S OUT OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE
ROCKHAMPTON QLD

Introduction

School's Out is a school age care (SAC) program providing before school (30 places), after school care (90 places) and vacation care (90 places) We are based at a state primary school. The focus of our submission is with school age care and consider it important to consider the following general point:

- School age care maintain a distinct identity as it reaches well beyond the early years and into middle years and beyond.
- School age care covers ages 4 ½ - 17 and will, potentially, provide care for the largest number of children of any child care sector.
- School age care also has a vital recreational aspect and is not as focussed on a child's school preparedness. This service feels that difference and identity should be recognized and valued.

The following statements reflect this services beliefs and wishes in relation to some of the commissions focus areas in this inquiry:

Ratios

- A need for consistency across all SAC programs nationally.
- Substantial research into appropriate ratios in a wide variety of circumstances.

Qualifications

- A need for national consistency across all SAC services.
- A need for research into appropriate qualifications for SAC. Currently a vast multitude of courses are considered relevant. This might be due to a lack of research or about ensuring that there are available qualified staff in a sector with few clear career paths to warrant readily available and dedicated SAC qualifications.

Financial Assistance for Families and Services and the SAC sector

- School age children receive only 85% of the CCB rate of non school age children.
- Schools/ providers are passing on more and more costs to services. The funding structure needs to consider this and provide some framework and guidelines for schools, providers and services for assessing appropriate fees and charges.

Flexible Care

- The nature of SAC nestles hours around school hours and helps cover almost 12 hours of a working day. School age children potentially spending longer hours in care may not be in the best interests of children.

Schools and School Age Care services.

- Many school based services and school management are restricted by different operational parameters and have difficulty occupying the same spaces. Providers and Schools need strategies to assist communication and connect the 2 entities better.
- High Schools largely ignore school age care as a possible value adding option. High schools have some wonderful resources like gymnasiums, sporting facilities and a wide variety of talented staff that could be beneficial to the SAC sector and add to the flexibility of child care arrangements for families.

Sincerely

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