

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to enter a submission into the inquiry on Child care.

I have an issue that I have come across for disabled children which I think needs to be changed. My personal situation/problem with inclusion support funding has been solved, but this problem will still exist for many families.

So, just to explain our situation, our current daycare has agreed to fund a support worker for my daughter out of their own pocket, for her to be able to attend kindergarten. However, this move by CandK is unsustainable and I feel obliged to help with fundraising efforts by the centre.

My daughter is 3 years old, has Spina Bifida and has limited movement and sensation in her lower limbs and requires the use of a wheelchair. She is also incontinent (bladder and bowel) and has many other medical issues. At present she attends long daycare 2 days a week, 8 hours a day. She requires the help of a support worker for those 8 hours, who is mostly funded by the Central Qld Inclusion Support Agency (federal funding). I return through out the day to catheterize my daughter.

My daughter is very settled in her daycare environment, loves her carer and is very well looked after. The staff and children at the daycare have lovingly accepted my daughter and happily meet her required needs. I had always intended continuing my daughter at the same long day care next year (2014), enrolled in the Kindergarten program. However, I have recently been told once my daughter turns 3 1/2 and is the target age for kindy, she will no longer be able to access the funding for a support worker.

I was told if she was to attend a stand alone kindy (not long daycare), she would have access to funding for a support worker. Which, as it turns out, is only \$6000 per child/pa-maximum level (state funding), clearly not enough to fund a support worker. Unfortunately, it is too late for my daughter to attend one of these kindergartens anyway, because I never intended to send her there and without this knowledge, never had her name on any of their lists. These kindergartens have already started sending out their placement offers for next year.

I have been told, after a number of phone calls with different organisations, that I have 2 other options-

I could try to enroll her into a long daycare who doesn't run a kindy program.

Or I could try to convince our current daycare to allow my daughter to attend the centre, with out being enrolled in the kindy program. Therefore, the daycare would be able to claim the CCB and would also be able to claim the inclusion support funding. However, this avenue could also be declined, it has been successful at other centres, but is up to the discretion of the inclusion support branch.

Apparently this problem came about at the start of last year(2013), when the government introduced the kindy programs into long day cares, along with the Universal Access funding. The UA funding is allocated to each child and goes directly to the centre to employ the kindy teacher. The problem, is with the inclusion support funding guidelines (which have not changed) that state you are not able to access the funding if you are already accessing other funding.

So, basically, if you have a disability and require a support worker, you can't go to kindy!!

My research in the last few months has also enlightened me to the fact that, even though there is funding (state and federal) available to kindys and daycares for support workers, it is not nearly enough to cover wages. It is then up to the centres themselves to fundraise. And so, having a child with a disability attend your centre can be seen as a burden.....

It doesn't sit well with me that as soon as a child with a disability is old enough to attend formal education, they are unable, due to Government funding guidelines.

I really hope you can help me make some changes in this area for our young ones!