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To the Commissioners,

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning.

I would like to offer some brief observations in regards to issues raised for consideration in this review.

I have been working in the early childhood for over 30 years but I have worked in community-based care and my child has attended long day care and after school care.

- I believe that the term 'Childcare' as used by the current Government does not reflect the inherent professional nature of the sector and the term "Early Learning" should be encouraged as it a broader and more professional definition .
- Having begun in this sector in the 1980's I was overjoyed to finally see the updating of Regulations to their current standards and even more so , the introduction of the nationwide National Quality Framework. In practice and theory these are worthwhile, practical professional tools and should serve as minimum standards.
- I have found the implementation of the NQF to have been thorough and well supported. The current changes under review seem to have had quite a deal of consultation and have not yet finalised any changes which could impact on people's comments in regards to this Commission's parameters.
- Support for all aspects regarding the implementation of the Early years Learning Framework and the NQF through ACECQA has been extremely thorough and accessible. Peak bodies such as Early Childhood Australia and Community Child Care Co-operative have constantly provided not only professional support through inservice and professional training but the through online support, publications and tip sheets. The information and support is easy , targeted and constantly being updated as issues arise.
- I am concerned by what I see is a determined effort by some sectors of the industry to push for a watering down or delay of some of the aspects of the NQF and the Regulations. My observation is that this is primarily from the profit-making sector of the industry. I note that some of the primary advocates for this sector eg. 'Central Support' frequently used the term "regulatory burden" when promoting such issues - yet they offer a solution to these problems by encouraging organisations to purchase their expertise to assist with the implementation of the NQF. I have also found that the not-for-profit sector seems to be more positively focussed on the aspects in this review that value 'Quality' and 'educational benefits' supported by the NQF to the children. I have also observed that comment from the for-profit sector focus on costs and regulations because these things effect their primary purpose- their profit.
- I believe the better outcome for families and children in regards to cost effectiveness and to quality care would be for the Government to support the establishment of more not-for-profit centres in a variety of incarnations. The NFP's do these things extremely well!

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- In regards to fees and funding, the current inclusion of NSW state funded preschools into 'Registered Care' (CCB) is confusing for parents. Parents accessing preschools should have access to 'Approved care' CCB, and similar tax concessions. Government needs to consider simplifying funding under the Commonwealth Govt.
- I am concerned about the delays in decisions regarding funding for children with additional needs and funding under the 'scan' and 'ISP' arrangements in NSW. Community-based centres take more children with additional needs and they require more adequate funding. There also needs to be a closer consideration of Early Intervention support between the early childhood sector and transition to the school environment. There are simply not enough places for these children to transition to.
- In regards to flexibility I have observed that the community-based preschools have been adapting hours of operation and group sessions etc. to accommodate for the needs of families – yet the ubiquitous 15 hour model used for funding for 'universal access' is an onerous imposition and needs more flexibility. There is no doubt every preschool aged child deserves access to high quality, professionally supported early education in the year before school, but there are better ways to do this and funding formulae should reflect this with consideration of the very different nature of each setting.
- I work in a community based preschool in the western suburbs of Sydney with an increasing population of CALD families, children with developmental delays (eg. ASD) and families where both parents are working. In the past 10 years, 9 private Long Day Care centres, have been built within a 1 - 5 minute drive. Each year we have increasing numbers of families coming to our preschool because they are not happy with the 'basic' quality of care in these centres. They comment upon lack of experiences and qualified staffing. Rising fees were a secondary concern but were linked to no observed improvement in staffing levels or equipment. They don't see value for money. They see "businesses run for profit" – not for their children.
- I believe we need to rethink who and how we are funding this sector. We should not allow profit margins to be the main determinant for quality standards and I hope that the voices of the little people are heard through these submissions to this Commission.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Jenny Matulovich-Medo