

Submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare

As a professional working mother of one I full support the National Quality Framework. I do believe that good quality services have been able to adapt to this new system very well. There are many myths that accompany this reform, one being that it is a burden. It is not, if the service is smart. Some services to need assistance to reach this high quality benchmark, this is, and should continue to be, supported by funded professional support bodies. I believe the National Quality Framework is needed to create high quality children's services for Australia's children. To scale back the National Quality Framework would be a terrible decision. So much has already improved, children are getting high quality care – we have come so far!

Have you experienced difficulty accessing suitable care for your child? If so is this due to a lack of services in your area or available places at the times you require?

It is apparent that there is a huge variation across the nation regarding accessibility to early childhood education and care services. I hear of many colleagues or friends being on waiting lists for many months, or even over a year, to get even one day in a service for their child, however I had the opposite experience. Every service I visited in my local area had availability, including long day care and family day care. I have recently had a flyer in my letter box for a local long day care service offering a free ipad mini with any enrolments.

Have you had any problems with a childcare centre's management of their waiting list? How could this be improved?

N/A

What factors influence whether you use early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, care for your child at home or have your child cared for by another family member?

Cost and quality were the deciding factors for this. Due to the \$7500 cap on the child care rebate, we decided to seek alternative care for two days a week. My 10 month old son attends a Family Day Care three days a week, and is cared for by his Grandmother two days a week. However, this option may not be viable in the future as the number of grandchildren increase. At this stage this situation is manageable as my son is the only grandchild.

Is affordability a significant barrier to your use of ECEC services or does it influence the type of service you use?

Affordability is certainly a factor. I had considered spending more time with my son by bringing him in to the city (Brisbane) with me every day and attending a CBD long day care so I could visit him during lunch break. The cost of inner-city centres was just too much. Fortunately, my husband is a tradesman so finishes earlier than I do, meaning our son can be picked up within normal hours (6am-6pm). If we both worked in the city this would be impossible due to transit times.

Do you feel you are able to make an informed assessment of the quality of different ECEC services?

I am able to as I have experience in the early childhood education and care sector. I understand the National Quality Framework, the Early Years Learning Framework and can view a service in operation and tell almost instantly whether they would be considered as good quality. The ACECQA national register is a very helpful

tool, probably more helpful than the MyChild website, as the information is more up to date, however doesn't show vacancies and costs.

Would you accept lower quality care if that care is closer to where you live or work, or enables you to work preferred days or times?

I would prefer to move away from Brisbane and live somewhere less expensive and not work than send my child to a poor quality service. Research shows that between birth to 5 years is a time of crucial development. We cannot let our children down. Early EDUCATION and care starts from day one. The early years in the time to equip children with a toolbox, a time to teach children HOW to learn. School (Prep-Year 12) teaches them the content.

Would you pay more for ECEC shown to contribute to better learning and development outcomes for your child?

If these learning and development outcomes were play based, yes. I am not interested in institutional based learning for my child, I think 5 is too young to be learning classroom-style let alone a child younger than that. All contemporary research shows that play based curriculums have the best long term outcomes for children. I'm not interested in tests, templates, 'school readiness'. I'm interested in a curriculum that supports my child to become a responsible citizen, kind to others, aware of the world around him, with strong social skills.

Are problems with access to, or the flexibility, cost or quality of ECEC preventing you from undertaking work or study (or the number of hours you would prefer to work or study)?

Not at the moment as our Family Day Care educator provides adequate flexibility.

How should any problems be addressed? Would, for example, extending childcare centre hours or the length of the school day make it easier for you to work?

N/A

Is current support for families (mainly through the Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and Jobs, Education and Training Childcare Fee Assistance) adequate?

It is certainly a big help, but once we add another child to our family and there is potential that our parents will not be able to help with looking after children a couple of days a week, we will struggle with the current \$7500 CCR cap.

Do you have any specific comments about access to, flexibility or the cost of occasional care; outside school hours care (including vacation programs); or preschool?

We placed my son on 15 waiting lists for preschools when he was a baby. When he was of preschool age he was only offered one place. Waiting lists are ridiculous. If families need to unexpectedly move to a different locality they can have next to no chance of finding care locally. The availability of occasional care is non-existent locally for us. Long day care is at least a year wait and before and after care is the same.

What factors other than ECEC are influencing your decisions about participation in work or study?

Wanting emotionally to stay at home with my children whilst they are young yet balancing this with a need to stay in touch with the workplace so I am not in a spot where I'm unable to get work in the future because of a lack of recent experience.