

14 February 2014

The Chair
 Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
 Productivity Commission

Dear Chair

CHILDCARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING INQUIRY

The invisible workforce

According to the Australia Bureau of Statistics, 26% of all children were usually cared for by a grandparent ([source](#)). The increase in parents using unqualified extended family and friends to care for their children has the potential flow through effect of the child missing out on vital developmental skills. CHARLTON BROWN® believes that children in the 0-3 year old aged bracket are at risk of missing on some of the key skills that a trained early childhood educator can provide. Educators are different to babysitters; they have studied the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and have the necessary skills and strategies to implement that work on the child's physical, social and cognitive development skills.

CHARLTON BROWN® suggests that an increase in the flexibility of child care options is required to meet the ever growing needs of parents working 'non standard hours'. In Home Care (IHC) in its current form only allows families who meet strict eligibility criteria access to a subsidized home based care service. Extending the scope of IHC eligibility will allow more families to have access to not only the Child Care Rebate, but also will reduce the number of 'black market' nannies and educators currently in the Australian workforce. It is also recommended that mandatory qualifications for IHC educators are implemented as is required for Family Day Care and Long Day Care in Queensland. Currently there is no requirement for IHC educators to hold a qualification or be in any formal education and training. CHARLTON BROWN® Employment Agency has always required our nannies and educators to have either graduated or be working towards their child care qualification. Furthermore, IHC services that provide flexibility for families also need to have access to training funding to ensure that IHC educators are up to date with industry requirements. Providing a more regulated IHC environment where parents and nannies work on a care program for the child/ren together could ensure those attending formal care under the IHC model could still be linked to the EYLF.

CHARLTON BROWN® understands that the increase in flexible and affordable child care options will not result in all children being placed in to regulated care. Therefore it is recommended that support is available to families who choose to continue using informal care from grandparents and friends. Implementation of supported and funded training to teach the importance of the early years for the children should be readily available to those providing informal care.

CHARLTON BROWN® recommends a scrutinization of the allocation of funds to ensure the funds go to the early childhood service to have skill gap training in areas that need work and are linked to the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards. The current situation has lead to an explosion of the 'black market' cash economy that is not regulated and has no requirement for quality care for young children.

Kind Regards,

Kay Ganley
CEO and President