



Submission to the Productivity Commission 1 April 2014

Here is my submission on behalf of the French-Australian Preschool. In this submission I will focus only on three difficulties that we have had in complying with the regulatory environment. Despite delivering a high-quality educational program we have struggled to comply with the regulations about that program because they are not well adapted to deal with the special and unique features of our school.

The French- Australian preschool has been operating since 1969. In 1994, the preschool was officially recognised by the French Ministry of Education. It also became licensed as an Australian Long Day Care Centre. In 1995, the centre gained accreditation from the Australian National Childcare Accreditation Council; it has maintained accreditation ever since.

In 2013 the preschool became an official partner of Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger\_AEFE, and is as a result part of a large network of French Schools overseas thus benefiting from pedagogical and other support. Our teachers have been educated in the French university system to the level of an Australian Master's degree and are qualified to teach children aged 2 to 12, they hold a Professeur des Ecoles Degree.

What the new childcare regulations have meant for our preschool:

In regards to the assessment of our French teachers qualifications.

ACECQA are requesting

- *Academic Transcript for the teachers' qualifications*
- *Information about the professional experience/practicum undertaken as part of the teaching qualification*
- *A certified copy of evidence their English language proficiency.*

For reasons explained below, we will not be able to provide the requested documents:

- In France, Teaching Universities all have the same curriculum as they are run by the French Government. All graduates receive the same teaching degree, which for primary teachers, qualifies them to teach children aged 2 to 12. Graduates will only be allowed to teach if they pass a final national exam therefore, transcripts are not necessary and therefore French teaching universities are not set up to provide them.

- Our teachers all have a long teaching experience and the requirement to provide 'evidence of practicum' is adapted to recent graduates from the Australian system not to long-standing professionals.
- We ensure our teachers speak English as they need to communicate with their students and their families.

While we understand and support the government's push to increase teaching qualifications, the way ACECQA currently assesses qualifications makes it impossible for us our teachers to be approved. Our temporary solution has been to enrol our tertiary trained French teachers in "Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care". However, it will be an additional impediment when we recruit new French teachers in the future.

We would like ACCEQA to acknowledge the validity of our teachers' credentials to teach preschool. We have found ACCEQA a little bureaucratic on this issue.

In regards to the way we will be assessed against the NQF. Our preschool has not been assessed yet. Assessors are given 7 areas to examine:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment Staffing arrangements
4. Relationships with children
5. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6. Leadership and service management

Each of these areas requires specialists to be properly assessed. The authorised officers have been chosen for their skills and are trained to be the most accurate possible but it is difficult for me to imagine a validator who is a pedagogy specialist as well as a service management specialist, for instance. This was already an issue under the NCAC assessment system.

In regards to policies, I would like to witness the following change: Since all childcare centres are assessed under the same standards, it would seem consistent if ACECQA provided childcare policies. It is a waste of resources that each childcare centre has to employ a person (often the person with the highest early childhood degree) to review and write policies. If National Standards have to be followed by all childcare centre, why are we not provided with policies?

I would like to thank you for the giving us the opportunity for this submission. I remain available if you need further information.

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