

Hi Productivity Commission

Apologies for this late submission, however, I hope you will be able to take it into account, as I think it does present a proposal which may help as part of the 'solution' to the current problems in this area.

In short, there are undoubtedly quite severe Childcare centre shortages and after school care shortages - I have faced this problem both in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, and now in Sydney's inner South. I have 3 children under 5 years, and getting placements for all 3 of them (particularly my youngest, who is only 7 months old) in Childcare centres is next to impossible, plus it is next to impossible for me to drop off/pick up my children each day given the hours I have to work as a full time lawyer.

A solution for families such as mine (which would free up my children's places in childcare centres for other families in need of care), would be for changes to be made to the VISA rules - specifically, to allow au pairs to stay with host families for longer than 6 months. I am considering getting au pairs when I return to full time work in August this year, but one of the main negatives is that each au pair can only stay with 1 host family for a maximum of 6 months. This is a very short period when it comes to the care and well being of small children (ie the au pair takes a couple of months to settle in, learn etc, and then they leave not lot long after that) - this is very disruptive for the children when you consider the emotional impact of building bonds and trust with a carer to only then 'lose' that person relatively quickly, and also for the parents of the host family as One of the parents (invariably the mother) needs to take a week or more of annual leave to settle each new au pair in and teach them what to do.

It would greatly ease many parents' situations if au pairs were more viable, which is predominately affected by their length of stay - ie a 12 month stay (or more) with each family would be much better. Not every family can host an au pair (ie as you need to have a spare room in your house to give them), so this would only be 'part' of the solution to the current problems. However, if my children were to be looked after at home by an au pair, this would actually free up 3 placements in Childcare centres and after school care facilities for other families who cannot host an au pair, so it would have an indirect/broader impact than just my family.

A secondary question is: is there any proposal to broaden the Childcare rebate (not benefit) to au pairs? This would greatly assist us financially, and would mean we would be able to offer an au pair more money, thus increasing the likelihood that we can get a better qualified person to au pair our children.

I work as a very senior full time lawyer (as does my husband), so we are both big contributors to the tax system, so it would be good if changes such as these could be made - this would have a fairly big impact on our family (and families like ours) without any negative impact on the tax and welfare of other Australians.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to reading the Commission's findings.

Many thanks
Jane Bowd