

I am the mother of a two year old daughter in a community managed not for profit child care service. I value the Early Childhood Educators and I value my child's safety and development. I am totally against the proposed changes regarding the educational standards of childcare staff. I believe that at least 50% of the staff should have a Diploma qualification or higher, to give every child the best start to life.

Putting my child into high quality care has given me the opportunity to return back to the workforce, helping me progress in my senior-level career and contribute to society. I am confident to do this knowing that my child receives quality care from experienced, well-trained staff. I am concerned about what may happen to children who are cared for by people who are not adequately qualified or experienced in best practice care and engagement with children.

Safety is my number one concern. If these people are treating childcare as a casual job, rather than a career, my concern is that they will treat their role too casually, not properly looking out for children's safety and wellbeing. My next concern is the development of my child's brain and the modelling of good behaviour from well-educated adults. I am not at all convinced that people who do not have a Diploma or higher have the training, experience, confidence or initiative to properly engage with the children at such an important stage in their brain development. Even worse, some of these people may be poor role models for the children, not because they are bad people, but because they may not know any better as they have not been trained in best practice care. We have all come across such well-meaning people in our day to day lives and sought to limit their time with our children. For these reasons, I support a nationally recognised working with children check up on all staff at childcare centres.

I am concerned that this proposed change also undervalues child carers and their careers. If the 50% ratio is dropped, the centres will be flooded with low qualified (and cheap) labour that I feel undermines the credentials and experience of the more qualified staff. We need to be supporting these valuable people and understand the contribution they are making to very young children's development. I have first hand experience of my 2 year old daughter coming home and telling me of a new word or activity that she learned that day and it makes me feel a lot happier about putting her in care. If these people did not feel valued or rewarded in their careers, there may well be a brain drain in the whole sector, which would be very detrimental for children's outcomes in the long term. If the people at my child's centre were dull, uninspiring and constantly-changing casual workers, I'd take her out and leave the workforce to care for her. Having the security of strong relationships and familiarity with the staff is clearly vital to my daughter's development and happiness. I fear that other children will miss out on this clear benefit if the proposed changes take place.

Lastly, the changes in the ratio of staff caring for under 3s horrifies me. As a mother of a little girl, I have seen first hand the violent and unsociable behaviour exhibited by some children (possibly with poor role models in their life) and am reassured by the fact that there is an appropriate number of trained and caring staff to look out for the smaller children and correct unacceptable behaviour.

A couple of times, children have been sick with contagious viruses, such as Rubella at the centre and the attentive staff quickly spotted this and dealt with it, avoiding an outbreak. I am very concerned that less staff per child would mean that the children will not be cared for as well and this could lead to serious outbreaks of infectious diseases and whole centres being shut down for a week. Especially with vaccine levels dropping.

Please reconsider these proposed changes as I feel that rather than valuing childcare and the vital role educated role models play in children's development, it is McDonaldsifying the

whole sector. I completely support more funding and flexibility in childcare to help mothers and fathers return to the workforce, but believe that this could be achieved by scrapping the proposed Paid Parental Leave Scheme and diverting funds to support the current childcare framework.

Quality childcare is not about buildings, furniture, books or toys. It's about employing high quality people. These are the people shaping the future of Australia and they need support and funding. For the sake of our children, please reconsider these proposed changes.

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