Dear Sir / Madam,

We the educators and families  at Berkeley Vale Pre-school are **gravely concerned** with a number of recommendations made within the Draft Productivity Commission Report.

* “The CCB category for “registered” child care should **NOT** be removed” – Many families who choose to use “registered” care, such as pre-school, also work / study – why should we be not eligible for CCB?  That is not equitable!
* Pre-schools should not be removed from the NQF – Pre-school services are committed to on-going quality improvement and should remain under this National Quality Framework.
* We have grave concerns in relation to the recommendation to drop qualification requirement to Cert. III qualified educators being responsible for children under 3 years of age.   This suggestion fails to recognise the signification brain, language and social development that occurs with young children under 3 years of age and quality developmental outcomes are strongly linked to the qualifications of under 3 year old children – Diploma trained and Early Childhood teachers are a must for Under 3 year olds!!  All the research within the Early Childhood sector strongly supports this.
* OSHC services being encouraged to care for PRESCHOOL aged children – This suggestion is MADNESS!!!  Children under school age need higher staff ratios and cannot adequately have their needs attended to when they are grouped with school aged children.
* The recommendation to **REMOVE** tax benefits for Not-for-Profit services and the suggestion to **remove** Payroll Tax exemptions from the State – by doing this will only increase our fees to families – which thus directly impacts AFFORDABILITY.
* There is no division between “care” and “education” for young children – the Productivity Commission is doing our Nation’s children the greatest disservice by even considering that there is a different between “care” and “education”.    The Abbott Government needs to invest significantly into Early Childhood Education, regardless of the type of service a family choose to use.  Please start thinking about the interest and needs of children **FIRST** not the economy!!  If we don’t start investing in our early years education – we won’t have a future generation to continue to drive and fuel the economy.              QUALITY CARE AND EDUCATION COSTS!!

Suggestions **we would support** include:

* Means testing a single child-based funded subsidy to families – The Early Care and Learning Subsidy – all families should receive the same subsidy – regardless of the type of learning environment they choose for their child / family.
* Moving all State funded community based pre-schools to be aligned to their local Public School – that will ensure State Government funding – smoother transition to school processes and better wages for Early Childhood teachers – until this wage disparity is addressed our Nation will continue to have difficulty attracting Early Childhood teachers to the sector – we are losing these teachers to Government schools due to better wages.
* Assessment and Rating system must be redesigned for faster assessment of services.
* The “Excellent” rating should be abolished.
* Governments and ACECQA should ‘explore ways to determine services’ ratings so they are more reflective of overall quality – current system is inconsistent and provides significant flaws.

We strongly urge the Productivity Commission representatives sit down with Early Childhood advisory bodies and University Academics to gain a clearer picture on how our Nation should steer Early Childhood Education.

Colleen Templeton

Nominated Supervisor

Berkeley Vale Pre-school