



2nd September 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to document more formally my comments and concerns for the Early Childhood Industry.

The Productivity Commission was charged with researching the best way for Australia to provide more flexible, affordable and accessible Childcare and Early Learning Services. In doing this I think that the quality that has been so important to many families and professionals over the past few years may have become less important than the availability. Surely providing better outcomes for children should also be part of this research.

Qualifications

It is suggested in the draft report that the under 3 year olds attending care in Long Day Care should have only Certificate III qualified level Educators working with them although the kindergarten aged children being older need the more educated teachers to assist them learn. Brain development research has stated that the development of the brain is influenced by the types and frequency of experiences of the child. To provide an environment that allows young children to explore, hypothesize and build on knowledge is very important for the youngest of children and more difficult to provide these opportunities. It is the very young babies and toddlers that need the most expertise in their educators to provide ways that they can participate in 'intellectual discovery'. To encourage the dispositions such as motivation, self-regulation, concentration and enthusiasm will help to provide a better future for these children in their own communities. It is through nurture and experimental interaction with the environment and people that these children will really grow. Group care is very complex and needs experience and more than a basic qualification to promote the best outcomes for children.

Funding

Early Care and Learning Subsidy Draft Recommendation 12.2

I agree that to streamline the funding subsidies for families would make it easier to manage as well as for parents to understand.

I do not agree that a ceiling for the payment of this subsidy should be in place for Centres that offer a more expensive service such as better ratios and qualified staff. This would establish an elitist field for those who can afford to pay rather than encouraging role models and improvements for all, in particular in lower socio-economic areas.

I do agree that funds from the Parental Leave Scheme should be used toward supplying places for the field especially additional needs children.

Further assistance for Centres that work with children with additional needs to encourage Centres to be more open to learning and assisting these families would be also welcomed.

The Recommendation 8.3 to abolish operational requirements to specify minimum and maximum operating weeks would be of benefit to services in seasonal areas of work and other fluctuating fields.

Information Request 12.4

It is very expensive to provide for under 3 year olds due to the child to adult ratios. However these are only basic ratios and should be built on when possible for safety and quality purposes. The places required by parents in Care are often for under 3 year old children, and there are less places for these children because of the cost of supplying these places. It is well known that the older age groups subsidise the younger children.

This needs to be recognised in the allocation of the Early Care and Learning Subsidy, even with charging a higher fee to parents, a higher subsidy is required to make it affordable to parents.

Universal access would be an advantage in Long Day Care where pre-school teachers are providing a kindergarten program. This funding was intended to be allocated across all early childhood areas and would make it more equitable for families to choose where they want to send their children. The hours in governments schools in Western Australia that have 15 hours per week allocated across a fortnight is very difficult for working parents to use (usually 3 days one week and 2 days the next week).

In concluding I would like to remind decision makers of their responsibility to continue to improve the child care field, not to undermine it for the purpose of making more places at an affordable cost.

Kind Regards,

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Director