

Submission for
Early Childhood Development Workforce Study
Productivity Commission
By
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I would like to comment on the training needs and opportunities of ECD workforce.

I have been involved in the training of ECD workforce under the traineeships pathway for over a decade, delivering nationally accredited qualifications on-the-job to a range of children's services sectors in Western Australia. Previously, I was a child care worker and centre operator for many years. I hold a Bachelor of Education, specialising in Early Childhood Education, as well as qualifications in Training and Assessing. Currently I work for SMYL Community Services, a community based organisation and a Registered Training Organisation.

Productivity Places Program - Higher Level Existing Worker Traineeships

For some years, government funding available through the traineeships system has made training affordable and accessible to many entry level ECD workers, enabling them to attain the minimum qualification of the Certificate III in Children's Services while being employed at children's services. It was not until 2007 that the Productivity Places Program for Higher Qualifications made it possible for those who have completed their Certificate III to access funding towards the Diploma of Children's Services and continue their training on-the-job. In spite of this initiative, State traineeships guidelines specify that people who have worked full-time for an employer over three months are classified as existing workers and become ineligible for funding towards the Certificate III (unless they are under 25 years of age). Without the opportunity to complete the prerequisite units in Certificate III, workers cannot take advantage of the PPP to enrol in the Diploma, and this effectively bars many mature age workers who have worked for some years in children's services from engaging in formal training and becoming qualified. The situation has caused a fair amount of confusion in children's services. It is my opinion that the three-month eligibility rule should be removed, to open up the training field for all ECD workers in an equitable manner.

Productivity Places Program - Job Seekers

While funding under the Productivity Places Program for Job Seekers allows Registered Training Organisations to provide training programs for people in the community who are seeking employment and training, such programs don't always attract the appropriate candidates for the ECD workforce. One of the key changes under the National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care is the new requirements for children's services to have more highly qualified staff. The first step to implement this requirement is to look very carefully at the way ECD workforce is being recruited at entry level. RTOs must take seriously the responsibility

of selecting from the pool of applicants those who have the genuine aptitude and potential to develop in training and work successfully in children's services. This unfortunately, doesn't always happen. The success rate for the PPP for Job Seekers in children's services courses is poor because these training programs are often offered as short courses, or on-line, with little practical field placement for students to practise their skills and learn on-the-job. RTOs are often not able to provide the support and nurture required by their recruits, many of them school leavers or long-term unemployed, and far from being work ready. Employers are less inclined to hire graduates from these short programs when they can take their time to train up their own employees through the traineeship pathway. Though the PPP for Job Seekers might open doors for people in some trades and industries, I don't believe it is part of a solution for addressing the need for more highly qualified staff in the ECD workforce.

Quality of training offered by Registered Training Organisations

Quality of training offered by Registered Training Organisations is pivotal to the quality of the ECD workforce. While RTOs all try to do their best, there is inevitably pressure from some children's services employers to 'fast-track' the training of their staff, for the reason that 'they have been doing it for a long time and basically running the room'. While processes are in place for Skills Recognition, RTOs must resist the temptation of going down the pathway of 'ticking the boxes' without vigorously assessing any skill gap and provide the training required for their students. There is always something to be learnt, no matter how long the person has been on the job. Formal training offers the opportunity to engage in learning as well as the opportunity to be recognised for skills already acquired. Children's services, Registered Training Organisations, federal and state training departments, and children's services regulatory bodies need to work together co-operatively, to understand each other's agendas, in order to promote quality in ECD workforce.