

**Early Childhood Development Workforce  
Productivity Commission  
Issues Paper (November 2010)**

**Submission from City of Monash (metropolitan Melbourne, Victoria)**



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This submission has been prepared by the Children's Services team at the City of Monash, and staff experienced and working in both kindergarten and childcare and the manager of an integrated service including cluster management of more than 20 standalone kindergartens, childcare, kindergarten, an early childhood intervention service and other family support services.

The City of Monash is located in Melbourne's south eastern suburbs 13 to 24 kilometres south east of the Melbourne GPO.

Monash is bounded by the City of Whitehorse to the north, the City of Knox to the east, the Cities of Greater Dandenong and Kingston to the south and the Cities of Glen Eira, Stonnington and Boroondara to the west.



The City of Monash covers an area of 82 square kilometres and includes the suburbs of Ashwood, Burwood, Chadstone, Clayton, Glen Waverley, Hughesdale, Huntingdale, Mt Waverley, Mulgrave, Notting Hill, Oakleigh, Oakleigh East, Oakleigh South, and Wheeler's Hill.

The City has a population of 163,000, with 30,978 children aged less than 11 years. The last 5 years has seen an increase of 2.4% in the 0-6 years age group although it is projected that the number of children in the 0-4 years will decrease over the next few years (MEYP).

30% of the population is recorded in the 2001 census as having been born in a non-English speaking country.

From the Issues paper, we have referenced the page number and the questions we have answered

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*What are some other examples of integrated and co-located services? What are the benefits and limitations of integrating and co-locating ECD services?*

### **Benefits of integration in ECD services:**

Whilst there is limited evidence in the literature for the benefits of integrated service provision, there is a growing body of practice wisdom that indicates the positive impacts of this type of service. As outlined in Moore (2006, 2010), these include:

- They are time effective for families
  - Multiple single entry points: Families only need to make one initial point of contact and assessment (intake) in order to access all services provided
  - Information provision. Parents have access to information in various forms regarding the community facilities and professional services that are available.
- Increased organisational efficiency
  - Increased productivity
  - Better range & flow of resources and support services
- Increased quality and accessibility
  - Consistent quality controls
  - Ease of access
- Improving the interface between communities and services
- Decreased incidence of families "falling through the cracks"
- Increased client satisfaction, and ultimately
- Improved well being and quality of life

These positive impacts have been reflected in the policy direction both in Australia and internationally (Toronto 1<sup>st</sup> duty).

### **Challenges in integrated service delivery:** (from Moore & Skinner, 2010)

#### *Partnership*

- While partnership working is widely assumed to be a good thing, it can be difficult to put into practice successfully- it requires careful planning, commitment and enthusiasm on the part of partners, the overcoming of organisational, structural and cultural barriers and the development of new skills and ways of working (Percy-Smith, 2005, 2006; cited Moore & Skinner, 2010).

#### *Clarity of purpose:*

The evidence suggests that there is confusion among policy makers, service providers and consumers as to what integrated service delivery is intended to achieve and what it means in practice (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009, cited in Moore & Skinner, 2010). The current guidance and terminology associated with integrated service provision needs greater clarity.

#### *Clarity of practice*

- The quality rather than the type of integration is what matters in terms of improving outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). Therefore, it is important to develop a clear, shared understanding of what is meant by 'quality' in integrated delivery of early years services and to ensure that services adopt agreed quality standards.

#### *Interpersonal skills*

- Effective integrated working is principally based on the personal relationships that are established between workers. While these may be effective in the short run, they may not be sustainable (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007 cited in Moore & Skinner, 2010).

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*The occupations of the childcare workforce can be broadly classified as:*

- *directors*
- *preschool teachers*
- *qualified contact workers*
- *unqualified contact workers,*
- *other workers, including cooks, volunteers and committee members (CSMAC 2006*

An important occupation that has been missed is that of second in charge (2IC) – a childcare centre cannot run without a 2IC.

*The occupations of the workforce in preschools can be broadly classified as:*

- *managers*
- *preschool teachers*
- *teachers' aides (or assistants)*
- *other staff (CSMAC 2006).*

In Victoria there are no managers in a kindergarten – more commonly the four year old teacher is called the Director. The use of the word 'manager' implies a greater level of control than currently exists.

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*To what extent is female labour force participation influenced by the availability of formal childcare? How might the demand for ECEC services be affected by changes to female labour force participation?*

*To what extent does the relative cost of ECEC services determine the demand for those services?*

The cost of ECEC is becoming prohibitive. There are women, especially part-time workers, whose wages pay only for childcare but who choose to continue working for a number of

reasons including keeping up to date within their profession and providing that developmental stimulus for their young children.

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*How might the proposed qualification standards, staffing levels, and the implied mix of skills and knowledge assist the delivery of the desired outcomes for children?*

*What effect will the new standards and targets have on demand for ECD workers?*

Just because we have articulated the outcomes required by the learning frameworks doesn't necessarily mean kindergarten teachers and qualified childcare staff haven't been delivering quality programs with whatever level of education they have – be it three or four year trained. There hasn't been enough articulation as to how that level of quality will be improved by having an expectation that all qualified staff will need to be four year trained. The concern is that some three year trained staff will leave the industry because they will feel devalued and not have their quality of work recognised. We know it is an ageing workforce and there will be substantial resistance to returning to complete a four year degree, when they have worked for many years providing a quality play-based developmental program, so it will become easier to leave. The amount of change in the ECEC sector that has come or is coming will be a burden to a great number of staff both qualified and unqualified..

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*Do providers of ECD services have difficulties finding staff? If so, are these problems more pronounced in some ECD occupations or in some areas of Australia? Why is this the case?*

*How much of the shortage is caused by low wages or wage differentials? Are there other factors (such as working hours or conditions) that are important in attracting staff to the sector?*

For kindergarten teachers to have the ability to negotiate ancillary time to support the nature of standalone kindergarten in regards to committees of management being a new committee each year.

The lack of a career structure for Educators is also an issue. There are few jobs available where they can still contribute to the early childhood field but not have the stresses on their bodies that teaching young children can give. Through the career structure there is no acknowledgement of additional responsibilities of being the Director of a kindergarten. Without pay parity with teachers in Primary School there will always be resentment and a perceived hierarchy across four year trained teachers. All teachers, early childhood and primary, should be part of the negotiations for an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

The turnover of staff could be due to a number of factors:

- Inflexible and long hours/conditions in childcare;
- Pay – difference between, primary, kindergarten and childcare – then there are private childcare centres and schools, not for profit childcare and kindergartens, corporate childcare and government funded schools;
- Society's perceived lack of acknowledgement of ECD staff and their qualifications;

- Lack of Professional Development for many staff across the sector especially childcare and kindergarten staff where they have to be backfilled according to the Regulations as distinct from government schools who have pupil free days during the year for professional development;
- Work load across the different areas of the sector – the perception of each group across the sector is that they are the only ones that work hard and if annual holidays are the benchmark then childcare staff have far less ability to reach parity with their kindergarten/primary colleagues.
- Lack of structure and career path
- Conditions of employer and employee especially in kindergartens where the employee educates the children of the employer (Committee of Management)
- Lack of peer support and mentoring in stand alone kindergartens
- There is a perception that ECD staff will not make waves because they are dedicated to educating young children.

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*Why are ECD workers paid less than those working in related sectors? Are the wages and salaries for workers in different ECD occupations appropriate, given the skills and qualifications required? If not, how might this best be addressed?*

- Teachers are not necessarily paid less in CC as compared to Kindergarten – it can vary according to the employer – some employers pay above award wages.
- To acknowledge that graduates who leave university with a teaching qualification should be paid the same wage, whatever setting they are employed in, which should also be incremented in a similar fashion with years of service. An issue for kindergarten teachers is that there is no structure for them to move through, as there is in the primary system. It would be easy to have the senior teacher in a kindergarten be given supervisory/management duties and rename them as coordinators.

*Does the regulatory burden have a significant impact on attracting or retaining staff in the ECD sector? Do you expect recently announced reforms to make a material difference to the regulatory burden facing ECD workers? What more could be done to reduce the regulatory burden?*

- **Regulatory burden** often falls onto the kindergarten staff as the committees of management in standalone settings change annually. There is a difference between the licensee, who is not on the premises on a daily basis, and the primary nominee and that there needs to be a greater understanding of what is involved in each of these positions. Changes to the Regulations are going to be of benefit but also add to the teacher's workload as the requirements continue to change.

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Getting started in the ECD workforce

- Speciality in age development is not necessarily an idea that is of benefit to staff as constantly working with the same age group for a long period of time is likely to lead to staff burnout and stress and make it difficult to retain staff.

*How appropriate are the qualifications required for entry into various ECD occupations? Do differences in qualification requirements restrict workers' ability to move between jurisdictions or ECD sectors?*

- The Universities are not covering the practicalities required for the work force. The entry score level into university does not reflect the importance of teaching young children within our society. We need to place value on our education and the teachers providing that education.

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*Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded? Is expertise sufficiently recognised and valued? How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced?*

*Are in-service training and professional development programs meeting workforce development needs? Are there barriers to ECD staff accessing training and development programs? If so, how could such barriers be overcome?*

- The process for kindergarten teachers to progress through validation process is onerous and time consuming and in many cases not worth doing because of the time restraints of the job
- PD needs to be valued and a greater amount of time provided to early childhood staff / teachers as happens in the primary sector, where teachers are given pupil free days during the year so all are available for PD. For kindergarten teachers it is necessary to find a relief teacher which adds to the cost of the PD. The other issue in finding relief teachers is that there is a finite number of relievers so many of the teachers are unable to attend conferences and seminars that would be worthwhile for their professional expertise. The DEECD funding criteria expects all kindergarten children to receive 10 hours 45 minutes per week for 40 weeks. It does not allow for multiple PD days over the course of a year. Many teachers undertake PD's during their own time therefore it becomes less of a priority for them.

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*Will the supply of qualified ECD workers expand sufficiently to meet COAG's objectives? How might the training of additional workers be funded?*

- There needs to be an increase in both universities and TAFE institutions offering appropriate courses so that there is a variety of choice for students when they are applying for places. The status of the profession needs to be raised so that students want to enter the ECD workforce and remain in it when they have entered it. There needs to be places available for mature age people, people wanting a career change and allowance for current staff to upgrade their qualifications. Work needs to be undertaken to raise the profile of childcare settings to make them more attractive to kindergarten staff without undermining current qualified childcare staff.

- The system of training ECD staff is somewhat flawed in that much is asked of kindergarten teachers in supervising training staff during placements. Those teachers are not vetted as to the quality of the programs being offered to children and quite often the last placement is the standard that new teachers will adopt regardless of the quality that University lecturers have tried to instil into them. There should be a standard that all supervising teachers have to meet, not just to put up their hand and get paid for it. Many concerns are also raised by the supervising teachers in that students that they feel should be failed, or at the least asked to do an additional placement, is ignored and the students are passed and enter the workforce without the necessary skills.

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*What is the scope for productivity improvements in the ECD sector?*

- Productivity improvements may be difficult for kindergartens and childcare settings as they are running currently. With the introduction of Accreditation to kindergarten, Universal Access to 15 hours and the Rating system, the educators will be required to increase their workloads significantly in order to comply with additional requirements, thus impacting on productivity.
- Many childcare centres have had employees who have taken advantage of the State Governments initiative to support the upgrading of qualifications and are now having those staff fully qualified as teachers so are now being able to provide funded kindergarten programs for their children and families. Difficulties arise when the difference in Awards between staff in a centre appear – in relation to the number of holidays and the pay rates.
- If we are to retain staff and expect them to upgrade their qualifications there has to be something in it for them, as it takes a lot of time and effort especially when they have to do placements away from their current workplace – employers have to backfill them which is costly to the service. The problem for them is – there might be financial gains or not; there might be additional holidays or not. We actually need some conformity and consistency around the conditions of the workplaces.

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*What are the implications for the ECD workforce, in terms of skill-mix requirements and work practices, from integrating or co-locating ECD services? Is there scope for the development of a generalised ECD workforce or a pool of specialised integrated services managers?*

- The management/leadership of integrated services requires a workforce that has had some specialised training rather than a unit during their course. The skills required need to be current and evidential based especially to take a leadership role as all new COAG reforms are set into place.

How will the ageing of the population, the introduction of paid parental leave, and other demographic, social and policy changes affect the supply of ECD workers?

- One of the main issues for the ECD workforce is the preponderance of females. This can lead to many of the workforce requiring maternity leave which then results in staff having temporary positions and under constant stress about mortgages and job satisfaction as they are required to move on at the whim of the teacher coming back.
- All of the new reforms may be a catalyst for the ageing ECD workforce to move on or retire. They will also need to see what is in it for them if they embrace the changes.

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*Do ECD workers have the skills to provide effective services to all the children who they regularly work with, including those with disabilities and other special needs and from CALD or low SES backgrounds? What additional skills or support might they require in order to do so?*

- We need to have practical hands on PD's to run programs to assist educators with working with children with additional needs, including CALD and Indigenous children. There needs to be specific workshops for the various diagnosed children as well as a broader behavioural guidance session set up during two weeks of February so that educators can go to a workshop early in the year which would enable them to plan appropriately for all children in their care. The sessions could be run out of Gowrie or at the various Early Childhood Intervention services. Many problems occur because there is no available training for teachers when they need it most. These sessions need to be funded by government so that the programs are not cancelled due to the lack of attendance or that educators are unable to attend due to location, time, etc. .
- Similarly for children from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds, there needs to be particular cultural awareness workshops available at the beginning of the year so appropriate interactions can be held with the children and families.