

Dear Angela

We met on 16 November 2010 when you, Robert Fitzgerald and Matthew Forbes visited South Australia as part of your initial discussions on the ECD Workforce Reference.

I am currently involved in considering and responding to the draft report and spoke with Ilias Matoris yesterday afternoon about some areas that are of interest to me. Ilias mentioned the Commission is currently undertaking modelling with regard to this reference.

I understand the Commission can work tightly to its reference or take opportunities to see implications that are broader than the reference.

Without prejudice I would like to raise some issues and seek your advice and/or comments on whether the Commission has considered the following matters and/or scenarios.

1. *Could the **Commission's modelling** consider the cost/other implications of providing **free universal access** of at **least 15 hours per week** of ECD services to children **0-5 years** of age?* This would ideally have **2 cohort scenarios**.... One scenario for services to **0 to 3 year** olds that would entail evidence based high quality interactive parenting/carer/child oriented programs to support brain development and build emotional resilience (more expert advice on the nature of programs would be required as I'm not an ECD expert). This would align with the international evidence of this vital period of human development underpinning the long term social and economic development of a society. The next scenario would be to focus on the **3 to 5 yr age group** and be based around high quality preschool delivery. Substantial international evidence was presented by Prof Edward Melhuish to SA ECD practitioners and policy makers in April this year. His findings are that part time high quality preschool has an equal benefit to that of full time attendance and high quality preschool can protect a child from the consequences of attending a low effective school - refer to http://www.adelaide.edu.au/hda/news/Forum19_Melhuish.pdf It is possible that by taking a gradual approach to implementing preschool provision to 3-5 yr olds (say initially modelling funding for part time provision building to fulltime provision over five years) would support a less challenging approach to satisfying demand for services and enable more families to access high quality services sooner. It may also assist funding better high quality provision to non-metropolitan regions through sharing expertise across 'nearby' centres/schools over a working week.
2. My second observation/issue concerns the fact that the SA Government's ECD Strategy has a focus on **0 to 8** year olds and the CoAG RIS for ECEC Quality Reforms http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-12-07/docs/ris_early_childhood_education_care_quality_reforms.pdf identifies from birth to 12 years. *I am interested to know how the Commission intends to consider the part of its reference viz "whether reducing sectoral divides between workforce in these sectors (VET, ECD & school) could support a more learner-focussed approach, achieve better individual outcomes and increase the efficiency of workforce development and planning.* As an external observer it appears local education ECD policy makers have had a focus on the 0-5 age group. I'm not sure how much thinking they have been doing about the workforce development implications regarding primary school teachers and school support staff for the **5-8 year** age group. There are implications for university and VET training of these 2 groups of school staff, particularly given junior primary school teachers do not necessarily have a sound exposure to ECD pedagogy or brain development. I have been reliably informed that ECD teacher training in SA has a stronger learning theory base than in junior primary teacher education.
3. *Does the Commission see linkages between its Chapter 8 draft recommendations for increasing support for children with additional needs (in particular those with disabilities) and its Reference on Disability especially its suggestions for the establishment of a National Disability Insurance Scheme?* There are two issues here. One is the age coverage of the suggested NDIS and whether funding of inclusion support services for children would be part of its mandate. The second concerns the potential for reducing sectoral divides between workforces in the education and training sectors as well as within community services occupations specifically in the context of inclusion support services for people with disabilities across the age spectrum 0 years to mature age.
4. *Observation.* The issues of reducing sectoral divides could also be applied to building cultural competence (indigenous and CALD related) across all three education and training sectors.

I trust the issues I've raised are comprehensible.

I would be pleased to expand further.

Kind regards, Anne

(Anne Bosio)