

City of Casey Response to the Draft Productivity Commission Early Childhood Development Workforce Report

Introduction – Context to Responses

City of Casey Demographics

The City of Casey is located in Melbourne's South-Eastern suburbs, between 28 and 60 kilometres south-east of the Melbourne CBD. The City of Casey is bounded by the City of Knox and the Shire of Yarra Ranges in the north, the Shire of Cardinia in the east, Western Port and Mornington Peninsula Shire in the south and Frankston City and the City of Greater Dandenong in the west. The City of Casey is a rapidly development residential area with large areas of land still allocated for urban development and surrounding rural areas. The City of Casey encompasses a total land area of about 400 square kilometres (.id Community Profile 2011).

Analysis of the age structure of the City of Casey in the 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census compared to the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD) showed that there were a larger proportion of young children in the 0-4 (7.8%) and 5-11 (11.7%) age groups in the City of Casey, compared to the MSD (0-4 year olds (6.3%) and 5-11 year olds (8.8%)) (.id Community Profile, 2011). The current population is estimated to be over 253,000 and in 2036 is forecast to be over 450,000 (.id Population Forecasts, 2011). Currently in 2011 the growth rate in the City of Casey is an annual increase of 6,220 people and a weekly increase of 119 people, demonstrating that there a large numbers of couples with children moving into the area.

City of Casey Early Childhood Services

- There are currently 35 City of Casey managed kindergartens, with 118 out-posted staff in the teaching team. There are approximately 2,112 children who are accessing City of Casey managed kindergartens.
- The City of Casey is Australia's largest deliverer of Family Day Care. There are 1,490 families registered to access Family Day Care, 2,117 children in Family Day Care, 267 carers and 18 staff.
- The City of Casey has a Child Care Complex that delivers community based child care and occasional care in Narre Warren.
- The City of Casey implements a number of State Government initiatives, including Best Start and Growing Communities and Thriving Children. Both programs are aimed at supporting children aged 0 to 8 years.
- Maternal and Child Health operates at 29 locations across the municipality. In 2010/2011 there were 4,079 births in the City of Casey.

These statistics demonstrate the importance of early childhood services to the City of Casey.

City of Casey's Response to the Draft Report

Government involvement in the early childhood development sector

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 3.1

To assist parents' decision making with respect to their choice of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for their children, governments should require ECEC regulators to publish all relevant information on service quality. Published information should be comprehensive, comparable across services, clearly explained and easy to access.

City of Casey response: Agree

- Particularly mindful of being able to compare across service types.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 3.2

To achieve the goals of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) ECEC reforms without disadvantaging low-income families through the anticipated increase in fees, governments will need to ensure that there is adequate financial support for such families.

City of Casey response: Agree

How?

- Increase in the Child Care Benefit (federal government)
- Increase in financial support per capita (state government)
- Increase in Health Care Card subsidy (state government)
- Increase in teacher subsidy (state government)
- Additional funding to support staff obtaining the relevant qualifications
- Additional places in training institutions for early childhood qualifications
- Additional funds for infrastructure
- Fee subsidy for low income families not in receipt of a Health Care Card.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 3.6

In implementing the National Quality Standard, governments should ensure adequate resourcing for regulators to enable appropriate training of their staff in the new regulatory arrangements and their effective implementation.

City of Casey response: Agree

- Increase resources in regulatory organisations.
- Training not adequate or accessible to all early Childhood educators.

The preschool and long day care workforce

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 5.1

To assist in the transition to the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education, governments should permit:

Any currently employed 3-year-qualified early childhood teacher to deliver the preschool program.

Any 3-year-qualified teachers returning to or entering the workforce to deliver the preschool program, provided a plan is in place for them to upgrade their qualifications to the equivalent of a 4-year degree.

City of Casey response: Agree

- Recognise 3-year qualifications.
- Need ability to upgrade within a timeframe, and with minimal impact on employment and service delivery subject to a grandparent clause, i.e. 20 years experience.

The outside school hours care and occasional care workforces**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 7.2**

Given that children typically spend limited time in occasional care, occasional care has relatively limited scope to contribute to cognitive development. As a consequence, governments should not impose additional mandatory qualification requirements on occasional care workers.

City of Casey response: Disagree

- Occasional care is more generally used as permanent part-time care rather than occasional care.
- All children regardless of the time spent in a service should have quality programs and be with staff with relevant qualifications.

The early childhood education and care workforce for children with additional needs**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.2**

To provide inclusion support staff with the necessary skills to ensure children with additional needs benefit from the COAG ECEC reforms, governments should provide additional, priority funding to cover both the cost of relevant in-service training in child development, disability and ECEC, and the cost of replacement staff.

City of Casey response: Agree

- Skills analysis to identify the needs and then cost of travel, course, accommodation (if required) and backfill at the same level.

Training the early childhood education and care workforce**DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 10.1**

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council should consider specifying the minimum periods of training and practicum associated with children's services qualifications. These minimum periods should be decided in consultation with ECEC providers.

City of Casey response: Agree

- There is significant difference in the skill level of staff depending on when they obtained their qualifications.
- Some registered training organisations (RTO) are expected to undertake workplace assessment and the RTO does not visit the workplace.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 10.2

Governments should facilitate access to VET by developing ECEC training programs targeted at contact workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including English language programs delivered in conjunction with ECEC training).

City of Casey response: Agree

This should be done in consultation with the ECEC service provider.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 10.8

Governments should ensure that all workers in ECEC services have access to professional development and support programs. Priority should be given to enabling workers to participate in professional development that will assist them to:

- Implement the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework
- Include children with disabilities and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in ECEC services
- Enhance the leadership and governance of ECEC services
- Work effectively in integrated ECD services.

City of Casey response: Agree

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 10.9

While there is no case for excluding teachers working in ECEC setting from existing teacher registration requirements in all jurisdictions, governments should not endorse or contribute funding to a registration scheme for non-teacher ECEC workers.

City of Casey response: Disagree

- All staff should be registered.

Child health workforce

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 12.2

Scholarships for postgraduate study in child health nursing may encourage a small number of additional nurses to obtain qualifications in child health or to practice in areas of high demand. The cost effectiveness of scholarships as a method of achieving this goal should be assessed by governments before any expansion of scholarship programs.

City of Casey Response: Agree

- Most municipalities currently provide a number of internal scholarships, however there should be an ability to provide a joint scholarship arrangement with DEECD either in the way of direct funding, or for those councils that provide scholarships, additional funding provided at end of year (given the additional costs associated with providing placement and education for these students).

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 12.3

In order to reduce unnecessary obstacles to attracting new child health nurses, state and territory governments should not require child health nurses to have qualifications in midwifery in addition to their qualification in nursing and in child health.

City of Casey Response: Agree

- It is the belief that Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Nurses frequently access the information learnt during their midwifery qualifications in dealing with many situations including health issues for both mother and baby. However, to avoid unnecessary obstacles to attracting new child health nurse, postgraduate level maternal and child health study could include any relevant midwifery units. This would avoid child health nurses in obtaining the additional qualification in midwifery.
- We need to ensure any changes to required qualifications do not negatively impact on the quality delivery of maternal and child health services.

Workforce for family support services

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 13.1

In order to ensure that family support services can sustain their workforces, and as wages are a major factor in the successful recruitment and retention of staff, government funding for family support programs should:

- Be based on relevant market wages and conditions for equivalent positions
- Take into account the skill sets required to perform the purchased services
- Be indexed appropriately to market wage growth within the relevant industry sector.

City of Casey response: Agree

- We need to acknowledge the complexities of our communities, the vulnerabilities that this workforce is providing services to, the increasing demand for supporting these workforces and providing up to date training and information.

Multidisciplinary Team

- Given the complexities of the families we work with, developing different models of service delivery are imperative to supporting the community in an appropriate manner.
- While there are acknowledged remuneration requirements for MCH Nurses, staff with Early Childhood, Social Work, and Family Support Qualifications do not have the same acknowledgement. This issue needs to be addressed.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 13.2

In order to facilitate better workforce planning by services and the attraction and retention of staff, government should increase the certainty and duration of funding for family support programs wherever possible.

City of Casey response: Agree

- Given the complexities of the communities and the importance of job security for workers this is vitally important to recruitment and retention.