

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION 2011 DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT WORKFORCE



comments from Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC), August 2011

Submitted by Email: ecdworkforce@pc.gov.au

Attention: Ben McLean

Early Childhood Development Workforce Study
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East,
Melbourne Vic 8003

Firstly, we would like to thank the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to submit our considered thoughts on the areas of the report that are directly relevant to the early parenting sector and/or to our sphere of influence or involvement.

The Queen Elizabeth Centre (QEC) is one of three Early Parenting Centres operating in Victoria. QEC has a broad reach covering early intervention service delivery, for vulnerable and at risk families with children 0-4 year olds, residing in metropolitan or regional/rural areas. Its operational history extends over 90 years.

QEC recognises you will be receiving a large volume of responses, therefore we are specifically responding to the draft recommendations within the chapter headings provided in summary format starting on page XXXIX and concluding on page LII.

Chapter 3.

We are concerned that an increase in childcare fees arising out of enhanced education delivery will disadvantage low income families. These families are already faced with daily life cost pressures and any increased cost will disadvantage them and reduce their ability to participate.

We pose a question – who pays?

Chapter 4.

Not referenced in summary section.

Chapter 5.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

Chapter 6.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

Chapter 7.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

Chapter 8.

We concur with the recommendations set out and provide additional comments.

- As an EPC, we often see children coming through the programs presenting with additional needs. Even at a very young age, we can recognise and diagnose emerging difficulties the parents will be faced with and we are able to refer them on to appropriate community support.

We are already involved with MyTime and our own inhouse program – PlaySteps® has helped us to diagnose early stages of learning disability, autism, and other developmental problems.

- QEC is very well placed to provide additional training modules for childcare workers. These modules could be 'add ons' to existing education offered at Victorian institutions - Swinburne University and Chisholm. Strategic linkages for placements could be offered whilst the workers are doing their training.
- Family Support Services lack the appropriate job structure and specialist knowledge of early brain development and how it is impacted by a young child's environment and the damage that can be caused if the early signs are not detected. Infant mental health is of growing concern.

QEC suggests offering additional training that applies non-stigmatised methods. Training in Family Partnership® and Keys for Caregiving® are two such programs that could be applied and offer a greater chance of circumventing the potential damage to a child.

- QEC believes it is important to tap into local networks of support rather than allow skills to go to waste arising out of a lack of funding for full-time work in a particular location.

Chapter 9.

- QEC concurs with the comments/recommendations and adds its own thoughts.
- QEC has access to facilities and an ability to offer its staff for outreach training at regional locations. It can offer additional modules not readily available or appropriate by distance learning.
- As QEC has a strong presence in Victorian rural and regional locations, we are cognisant of the challenges befalling the professionals who may need to travel long distances on a regular basis. Housing is only one area of need. Most find it difficult to 'back fill' their own positions when dealing with vulnerable families. In some cases this leads to burnout or leaving the sector altogether.
- We suggest the incorporation of 'reflective practice' as an appropriate and additional incentive for those dealing with high levels of stress and isolation; especially those living and working in remote and regional areas. (QEC is happy to provide additional information on this program if requested to do so).



Chapter 10

- QEC concurs with the recommendations set out and offers additional input.
- Our proven models of working could be further developed in partnership with approved registered training organisations. QEC has 17 staff members who have been trained in PlaySteps and all QEC staff have undergone Family Partnership® and Keys to Caregiving® training. This knowledge can be shared for the benefit of the sector workers who need to undertake further studies and especially older nurses who are returning to the workforce and need to be trained in more contemporary practices. As they will be faced with more complex and diverse families, these are just two identified programs that would greatly assist their transition back into the workforce.
- Family Partnership® training is also suitable and offers an excellent grounding for undergraduates who are just embarking on their career. They can become optional 'add-on' modules to their course of study.
- QEC is aware of the sensitivities of working in CALD and Aboriginal communities. In recent times, we have been rolling out tailored, non-academic based programs through community leaders. We cite the partnership project with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) as a success that can be built upon for regional communities with special needs. (This is in direct response to Chapter 14).
- We pose a question – If preschool mothercraft nurse training is removed, what additional training will these individuals need to supplement their skills?

Chapter 11.

We concur with the recommendations and do not provide additional comment.

Chapter 12.

We concur with the recommendations and do not not provide additional comment.

Chapter 13.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

Chapter 14.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

Chapter 15.

Not applicable or appropriate for us to comment on.

End of comments from QEC. Thankyou



