

**EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT JUNE 2011
RESPONSE FROM VICTORIAN FAMILY DAY CARE EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION INC (VFDCEA)**

Victorian Family Care Educators Association Inc (formerly Victorian Home Based Carers Association) is the body representing Family Day Care Educators in Victoria. All members and executive are working educators and all positions within the organisation are voluntary. VFDCEA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report. VFDCEA supports the Reform Agenda and is pleased that Family Day Care has been included.

Non contact/release time

Many FDC educators know the greatest barrier to effective delivery of the EYLF is a lack of time.

The EYLF requires reflection and documentation.

Much has been done to improve the quality of care and the educational aspect of care has been recognised but nothing has been put in place to improve the working conditions of educators by providing them with release or non-contact time.

Education, information and pedagogical leadership are all important aspects of the EYLF but contact workers need support to deliver the program. We need time to complete the reflection and documentation which are integral to effective delivery of the EYLF.

This issue has not been addressed, we are told too difficult, too expensive, the government does not want to hear about it, the Productivity Commission will look at it, just do it, as a consequence we have educators documenting at 1or 2am, using what should be time with their own family even dropping a working day to create time for documentation.

For effective delivery of the EYLF Family Day Care contact workers need to be provided with non contact time for documentation. We need to be accorded the planning time that is available to contact workers in long day care and preschool.

We are confident that a way could be found to provide this necessary release time.

The brilliant vision for the future of childcare must not be built on the exploitation of the workforce.

Family day care fees and contact worker income p92

The fees and income for Family Day Care contact workers are a complex issue.

Family Day Care remains captive to entrenched practice that does not reflect a business model. Many years ago there was Commonwealth policy of fee reduction at the time of service provision, meaning FDC contact workers went without so families could have.

Families paid reduced fees at the time of service provision and the parent entitlement was later forwarded to the contact worker. Contact workers for decades have by default provided families with "bridging loans".

Educators who charge full fees up front are a true minority, some schemes insist that educators wait until time sheets have been processed before charging families; this means families are paying for care several weeks later.

This model continues in FDC, despite policy having changed with CCMS suggesting full upfront payment and the entitlement being credited to parents once received.

The educator also collects a levy on behalf of the scheme; this is usually achieved by the scheme withholding CCB otherwise due to the educator as balance of the family debt. If a parent fails to pay there is never recognition that the scheme levy has not actually been paid and that a debt is owed to the scheme, the scheme has their money from the CCB pool and the educator wears that debt as well. We have never heard of a scheme refunding to an educator the parent levy when a family fails to pay an account.

Full fee payment upfront provides greater income security for educators.

Some contact workers are able to set their own fees, others schemes set a common scheme fee and other schemes where fees are supposedly de-regulated boundaries remain, such as a range in which fees may be set, restrictions around the frequency and timing of increases. A number of schemes are resistant to fee deregulation despite this being widely accepted practice in other states.

Schemes set rules around timesheets and reasons for not processing timesheets can be quite idiosyncratic. Schemes are given varying advice from Compliance Team about detail required on the educator paper copy of the timesheet.

Compliance requirements need to be transparent and known to the educator.

Fee payment in FDC needs to be fair, equitable and timely to educators at no stage should educators be carrying debt.

Family day care workforce training p101

Training for FDC contact workers is not only about loss of income but loss of personal time.

By necessity training for FDC educators occurs in the evening or at weekends.

In some situations FDC educators would be willing to attend high quality training and lose income but the inconvenience to families (through lack of alternative care) is a consideration.

Current regulation severely limits the use of relief or alternative care and lack of reliable relief care is a barrier to educator participation at daytime training sessions in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Training must go beyond attaining the required Certificate 111, educators need access to high quality professional development throughout the year.

Pedagogical leadership p10

Some pedagogical leadership for FDC contact workers could be provided via the delivery of high quality professional development days (as an example, days organised by the Resource and Development Unit/Community Child Care). Quality presenters, recognised by the sector as pedagogical leaders with training tailored to the needs and understanding of the contact worker have a positive impact on educators understanding of the process.

It may not be possible to reach every educator through professional development days but it would be a good start.

Conclusion

Workforce issues are many and varied in Family Day Care and we appreciate that a start has been made; the Australian Government needs to commit funds to the sector for implementation of the EYLF.