

Response to Productivity Commission Draft Report Into Early Childhood Development Workforce Regarding Outside School Hours Care (OSHC)

**Prepared by OSHCsa,
October 2011**

OSHCsa is the peak body for Outside School Hours Care in South Australia. We represent approximately 335 services and nearly 50% are financial members. OSHCsa supports the submission from the National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHSA). We would also like to make the following points:

Re: 'Non-cognitive Development'

We disagree with the use of the term 'non-cognitive skills' in the Draft Recommendation 7.1. Children are learning all the time. OSHC services aim to provide rich play-based learning environments where children can learn a range of skills and knowledge, including important socio-emotional skills. Latest neuroscience research has uncovered how the brain's pathways actively grown in low-stress and high stimulation environments. We therefore find it insulting and ignorant to read that OSHC is 'non-cognitive'. Many OSHC educators are fully qualified teachers who have chosen to work with children in play-based environments, as opposed to the structured classroom environment.

Re: Qualifications

Given the states and territories currently have different requirements for the qualifications of educators we do not understand how a blanket statement can be made regarding 'additional qualification requirements'. Some states currently have no requirement for qualifications in OSHC, some have a Certificate iii or iv as a minimum qualification and our state (SA) requires that every second educator must have a minimum of a Diploma.

We agree that the sector could not cope with mandatory qualifications for ALL educators, (such as what is being introduced in long day care). OSHCsa does not support minimum qualifications for all educators. One of the strengths of our sector is the diversity of the educators. OSHC services in South Australia currently operate with the expectation of fifty percent of educators being qualified and this is challenging enough, without the expectation that one hundred percent must be qualified. A unique aspect of OSHC work is the split shifts and minimal hours. As a result some educators will only work a handful of hours in a week. It is not reasonable to expect educators to gain a qualification to work such minimum hours. The OSHC workforce is also highly casual and transient. OSHC work is ideally suited to university students and expecting them to gain a qualification for their work, while also studying something else, is once again, unreasonable. Instead, we should embrace the opportunity presented by university students and find ways to work more closely and regularly with the students and the universities.

OSHC educators can have an important influence on children's development and wellbeing, and as such, we find it important that OSHC services are led by qualified educators. We support the notion of fifty percent of educators having a qualification. We would support the remaining educators acquiring a skillset, as opposed to a qualification.

Re: Lack of Research and Data

There is a distinct lack of data and research on the OSHC sector both Australia-wide and also internationally. There are many unique aspects of the sector which set it apart from both the education sector and the child-care sector. This makes it challenging for outsiders to understand the differences. There needs to be a thorough analysis of the sector which identifies the challenges and limitations of the sector, but also embraces opportunities - such as employing students and greater links with universities.

Re: Draft recommendation 3.6

Regulators undertaking assessment visits must have the same minimum qualifications expected of service personnel, as well as industry experience.

Re: Draft Recommendation 8.1 to 8.3

OSHCsa supports the Network NSW submission regarding the absence of services for 13-18 year old children and the fact that OSHC services for 5-12 year olds are absorbing these children in circumstances that are unrealistic and not in the best interests of children or educators.

There is a lack of training and insufficient funding to provide adequate support to OSHC staff for the management of children with high and complex needs and this is placing OSHC educators at risk of burn out or injury. Services who deal well with children with high and complex needs are encouraged to take on more and more of these children at their own financial detriment – as the gap widens between the real cost of taking on these children and the amount of funding they can receive.

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