

To Whom It May Concern,

I have been involved in the Care and Education Industry for 20 years now – working for Services and now owning my own Long Day Care Service in NSW (I have owned my service for almost 14 years).

I have seen many changes in this Industry over time – some great and some not so good.

The introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards has brought some great changes to programs / Services but also brings lots of paperwork, stress and in some cases, tokenistic things to meet standards required – something that I don't agree with. I have seen many instances where Services have gone out and gotten chickens, rabbits, etc. to educate children about sustainability but it is not embedded into the programs and children are not learning the real meaning of sustainably. This is just one example and I am sure there are many more.

Australia needs to have regulations that are the same for each state – this includes same ratios, same level of qualifications, etc. The requirement for Early Childhood Teachers in Care and Education Services is not necessary. I have Diploma Qualified Educators who run beautiful programs and have been devalued because of this requirement. Having Early Childhood Teachers into Long Day Care Services does not mean better quality or great programs – it just means Service Owners are paying out more wages for higher qualified Educators and this is being passed onto families as fees go up and up to meet the demand of qualified teachers required.

I have had to seek temporary waivers for these positions and pay a fee to obtain them – which is absolutely ridiculous. I cannot understand if you have a university qualification and you are good at what you do, why would you want to work longer hours in a Long Day Care Services? This makes no sense to me. There are so many wonderful Educators leaving this industry because of the changes that has been brought about by the National Quality Framework. We need to place more value on people who want to work with children and help them to stay in the industry – not drive them away with higher qualification demands and paperwork. The requirement for ETC in Child Care Services needs to be scrapped – there are so many Diploma qualified Directors that are now trying to study, run Services and deal with the day to day demands of directing Services – this is going to equal massive burnout and once again, great people will be leaving our industry. It needs to be stopped and some common-sense prevail. If we must have ECT in Services, why can there not be on-the-floor training like there is for Certificate III and Diploma?

The system needs a massive overhaul and things need to go back to basics where Advisors come into every centre – without notification and check to ensure the Centre is meeting high quality (meaning that there are programs happening that cater for all children, learning is documented, correct staff to child ratio applies, and all the basic things are covered). There should be no need for assessment visits if Advisors are regularly coming into Services to ensure everything is being done to the highest quality. As it currently stands, having an Assessor come into a Service for 1 or 2 days means nothing. They merely get to see a snap shot of what goes on (which is why it is so easy for Services to do so many tokenistic things during the visit) and in most cases, Educators are so nervous and stressed that they can't explain things and feel like failures if things are not observed by the Assessor. Why does this industry need to be so difficult? The main focus for Child Care Services needs to be caring for children, providing environments where children feel safe, secure, loved and of course, happy. That is what every parent who leaves their child wants – they are not interested in reading pages and pages of information on EYLF or NQS, they want to SEE their child happy and having fun at the Service.

The National Quality Framework needs to be axed – it is pointless advising Services when their assessment is going to be. I have heard of Services that call in relief staff for the days to ensure correct ratio, Centres swapping resources to ensure that they have adequate natural elements in programs (both inside and outside) as well as doing all of these wonderful things for sustainability and recycling (but they only happen at the Service during the assessment visit).

The required documented evidence is also such a waste of time – why should Educators have to do all of this paperwork (observations, learning stories, reflections, programs, critical reflection, etc. with everything demonstrating links to the EYLF) for Assessors – this is not why Educators choose to work in this industry. We want to work with children for exactly that reason – working with children, not completing pages and pages of documents so that we can use them as evidence during assessment visits.

I place a lot of value on my Educators – they are paid above award wages and I really appreciate everything they do for me and my Service. Imagine how they feel being told that ECT are needed in Services to produce quality programs? There must be an easier way to ensure Services are operating at high standards and the children are being well cared for???