

**CHARLTON BROWN® Submission****Productivity Commission - Childcare and Early Childhood Learning**

Leading childcare and nanny training college, CHARLTON BROWN® has welcomed the release of the Productivity Commission's draft report on Childcare and Early Childhood learning.

**Qualified Care**

A lack of access, flexibility and surging costs for working parents has meant that a growing number of parents working 'long-hours' and 'after-hours' have had to resort to unqualified care.

Regardless of where the care of our children takes place – whether this is in Childcare Centres, Family Day Care or In Home Care – the care children receive has to be quality care. The first five years of a child's development is vital to their physical, social and cognitive development, and wellbeing.

**In Home Care**

The Productivity Commission acknowledged in their draft report that 'subject to appropriate qualifications' parents who choose to access nanny services, will become eligible for childcare subsidies.

CHARLTON BROWN® believes that this is a huge win for working parents, because in its current form the 'In Home Care' program only allows families who meet a strict eligibility criteria are able to access Commonwealth childcare subsidies. The decision also recognises the importance and value of qualified nannies in our community.

**Nannies**

CHARLTON BROWN® has been training and placing quality community services professionals since 1985 and has 'In Home Care' contracts in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

Certificate III and Diploma level qualifications in Early Childhood Education have evolved with a focus on producing Childcare Centre educators rather than 'In Home Care' carers.

Nannies create a safe and stimulating environment for children in the home and community. Educating and caring for children in the home requires a different skill set. It makes sense for a family to have a qualified early childhood worker providing care in their home, the support should be available.

Frustrated parents, enlisting unqualified extended family and friends or 'black market' babysitters to care for children has the potential to effect the child's vital developmental skills: trained professionals have the necessary skills and strategies to implement to improve physical, social and cognitive development.

## **Family Day Care**

CHARLTON BROWN® does not support any recommendation to move 'In Home Care' under the management of Family Day Care. Until recently, Family Day Care regulation did not require for the carer to be a trained and accredited child care professional; many who still operate Family Day Care do not meet the national industry standards with regards to qualifications. Alternatively, we propose an increase in the regulatory framework of Family Day Care to ensure that Family Day Care meet industry standards.

## **Au Pair Program**

CHARLTON BROWN® recommends that the Productivity Commission consider the introduction of a specific Au Pair Visa. Currently, people interested in working as Au Pairs enter Australia on Working Holiday Visas (417) or Work and Holiday Visas (462).

An Au Pair lives in the family home and in return for board, lodging and pocket money (200 – 250 \$AUS per week) they care for the children up to 30 hours per week. Currently they are not qualified childcare workers and cannot work with infants but instead play the role of a mother's helper for children five years and above.

CHARLTON BROWN® believes that like all child carers, Au Pairs should be qualified and should meet national industry standards to ensure that they provide the best possible level of care to those in their charge.

Traditionally, Au Pairs are also students and under the Au Pair Visa they could be enrolled as an international student in a program of study (English Language, Vocational Education and Training or Higher Education). The Au Pair Visa could perhaps be trialled with international Vocational and Higher Education students who are studying early childhood, education or children's services.

An Au Pair Visa would negate people using 417 and 462 Visas to work illegally in the home as an unqualified carer of children under five. An Au Pair Visa could also include provision for the Au Pair to work with the one family for a 12 month period or the duration of their course of study; thereby providing continuity of care in the home for the children.

## **Women in the workforce**

The Productivity Commission's draft report identified the key issue; the necessity of the provision of quality, flexible and affordable child care to ensure that the workforce participation rate of mothers continues to grow. CHARLTON BROWN® strongly supports this Government objective and looks forward to working with the Government to achieve this outcome.