

**PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING  
SUBMISSION BY ANELLA YEOMANS (EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER/INDIVIDUAL PERSON) ON  
THE DRAFT REPORT - DUE 5 SEPTEMBER 2014.**

**Introduction**

I have been an early childhood educator for 7 years. I commenced work in the early childhood field as part of an agency specializing in placing educators while I studied the Certificate III qualification. I gained a wide variety of experience in many centres across Melbourne. As I decided to continue in this work I qualified with the Diploma in Children's Services and experienced the many benefits of gaining this qualification. I continued to appreciate the value of further knowledge and education as I experienced working with many degree qualified staff whose practice standards of education and care were so much more enhanced from having higher qualifications.

I have now completed a Bachelor in Teaching (Early Childhood) and over the past 7 years I have worked as an educator and a teacher in the following settings: two local councils which each having five child care centres, a leading early childhood service which provides training to the sector and I am currently employed as a teacher in a newly established integrated service.

**Submission**

I welcome the Productivity Commission's Draft Recommendations and support the following **positive initiative**.

I particularly support **the funding of coordination of activities in integrated services**. I have had many instances whereby the Maternal and Child Health Nurse has provided children with checkups and assessments which have led to early intervention and positive outcomes for children's health and wellbeing. An example of this is when a Diploma qualified educator suggested to a parent that the child have a checkup as there was some concern about the

child's hearing. The final result shows the value of integrated services as the child had blocked ears, received treatment and then demonstrated increased language and social skills in the program. The centre has extended the availability to all families for these checkups by providing standard forms to create easy access for families within this integrated service. I welcome the Commission's recommendation of funding of co-ordination of activities for such a service as the centre at which I work.

I have a **key issue of concern** which I will now address.

### **Qualification requirements for educators working with children under 3 years.**

I agree with the Commission that warm nurturing relationships are important for children under 3 years. However, it is essential to keep the current requirements for at least 50% of educators working with this age group to hold a Diploma level qualification or higher. A Diploma educator has had extensive training in a child's physical, emotional and intellectual development. From this training such an educator can respond to a child's needs to provide not only the necessary warm nurturing but also the environment for extension and growth of all the areas of a child's life. Such an educator at the moment is in charge of up to 16 children in a room with three educators to support that role. The Diploma qualified educator also holds knowledge and skills to communicate and support the families of these children.

This is a highly complex role which is constantly requiring professional development in order to meet the demands of meeting national quality standards and the communication skills to collaborate with families for the wellbeing of their children. Many of these children have parents who are both working and are in care from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm. Parents are extremely busy and may rely on the educators for support about their child's development and information about the other community services which they require such as immunization or assessments regarding developmental challenges which may have been observed by the diploma qualified educator and which may require further intervention.

A diploma qualified educator holds this knowledge and skill and I **cannot support** your Draft Recommendation 7.2 that all educators working with children aged birth to 36 months are only required to hold a Certificate III level qualification. I understand that the Commission has already been provided with evidence about qualifications being an important component of quality and research about the significance of the early years to children's development and outcomes later in life.

### **Conclusion**

I strongly urge the Commission to re-evaluate the Draft Recommendation 7.2 based not only on my recommendation but on that of the overwhelming majority of the early childhood education and care industry. It is essential to keep the current requirements for at least 50% of educators working with this age group to hold a Diploma level qualification or higher. This will ensure that children receive the highest quality care from warm nurturing educators who also hold the necessary knowledge to provide high quality education and care. I believe that should the Commission make this wise and informed decision it will be remembered and celebrated by all those in the industry, the families and the little children under three years old who are and will be in care for the many decades to follow.

Anella Yeomans

Early Childhood Teacher

4 September, 2014