

22 Jan 2014

To the Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my concern with the rising cost of day care. In particular, I have concerns regarding a business practice within the childcare industry that I consider unfair and that gives great difficulty to parents with young children.

My daughter attends Little Learning School Daycare in Leichhardt NSW. I wish to be clear that I have no complaint with the quality of care or with the dedicated carers of this centre. I am quite happy with the National Quality Standard and the regulation of care provided by the government.

My complaint with the practice of charging parents the daily rate for holidays when the centre is closed. The daily daycare fees are already quite high at \$112 a day (approximately \$29,000 a year). Since daycare fees are charged on a daily basis, I do not understand why parents have to pay for holidays when the centre is closed. I brought this up with the owner of the daycare whose response was that it was the law and all daycare centres had to comply with it. I was shown some generic policy documents about the parents' obligation to pay the centre fees but I have not seen any law or policy that specifically states that this practice is allowed.

If there is a law or policy that allows daycare centres to charge a daily rate for holidays where no service is provided, then I do believe that is an unfair business practice.

As evidence, I have attached our receipt from the daycare that clearly outlines the changes for 25 and 26 December 2013 (Christmas and Boxing Day). I have blacked out our address and my daughter's last name for privacy reasons. If this document is helpful, I can provide the original document.

Like many parents, we struggle with the very expensive daycare fees that have limited our ability to make other important financial decisions such as buying a home. As a migrant, I have no relatives who can look after my daughter on a regular basis. Our only options are to pay the daycare fees or for one of us to stop working — which puts us in an even worse financial position. As a parent, I feel that these particular policies take no consideration of our needs, rights or difficulties.

The affordability of daycare is a threat to the industry. At \$112 a day, some daycare fees in Sydney are as expensive as private schools.

If possible, I wish to request your office to please verify the childcare industries' policy regarding collection of fees on holidays. If these policies are deemed unfair, I wish to have them challenged by the appropriate governing body. I ask for your help in this matter and hope that it can be clarified and acted upon accordingly.