

Productivity Commission

23/1/14

To whom it may concern,

My name is Michelle Collins. I have worked in the Child Care sector for 23+ years. I have worked in all areas of the child care field within my service throughout this time. I am currently the Assistant Director at Diagonal Road Community Children's Centre which also involves some Administration duties.

When the Early years Quality fund was initially introduced, I did have reservations about the initial introduction and process that we were about to embark on. I will fully support higher wages for our Educators as I have felt for many years this is long overdue. Our Industry and our Educators deserve to be recognised as such, however I had reservations towards the manner in which we were "encouraged" to apply and fight for our recognition. This then involved strategic planning and pressure to "compete" for part of this fund dividing the Child care field and Services I have worked long and hard to help establish over my Child care career. I was personally saddened that this was our only option, one in which we were willing to participate in for the benefit of our Service and it's educators. We were always in a no win situation.

The time frame in which we were given to complete our application for the EYQF was pressure within itself, the hours preparation compiling the relevant documentation and information was intense and stressful and the pressure it posed on my fellow co workers was something I never want to witness again within this Industry not to mention the cost to our service.

I was always sceptical about the introduction of this fund as it was close to election time and our service was put in the position of "fast tracking" an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement which was something we had not encountered before.

We were blindsided into a position of hope, confusion and total misunderstanding by the Government, by United Voice and by the current Liberal Government who had no intention of following through with the Early Years Quality Fund.

We were already implementing the National Quality Framework at this time which in itself has its own financial and cost implications. The NQF certainly has its advantages and relevance but it also has been time consuming and there have been a number of costs incurred to our Service.

The need for an Early Childhood Teacher within our Service for 30 hours/week also suggests that our Diploma Trained Educators are not "capable" of fulfilling their initial employment responsibilities and directly affects our Service, families and their children, rostering and

Staffing, financial requirements and basically for our Service who has served our Community for over 20+ years is deflating.

We were fortunate that we were approached by an Early Childhood Teacher who had the relevant qualifications to fulfil the role. Her employment started late 2013 and we were under the impression she was capable of fulfilling her role and conditions continuing on in 2014. She was aware of the NQS and our responsibility to fill this position. She resigned 2 weeks before Christmas stating that she had decided to seek teaching work within the school system. We were then forced to apply for a waiver for our Service for 3 months so we were not in breach of regulation. This then incurs a substantial cost factor involving advertising, interviews, rostering and Administration organisation to again proceed with the employment process, to which we are not guaranteed a suitable applicant. I am truly disheartened that this has occurred.

I personally have been overwhelmed over the past few months. Over the past 20+ years I have been involved and seen so many changes to the Child care sector. Some for the better, some I have questioned but I am hoping I never have to witness the turmoil and confusion, the financial pressure and competitive nature for professional recognition that I have been part of in the past few months. Our Service and it's loyal, extremely dedicated and "professional" Educators and Staff deserve better.

Regards Michelle Collins

Diagonal Road Community Childrens Centre