

Productivity Review Submission
Kathy Toirkens
On behalf of Braidwood Preschool Assoc



About Braidwood Preschool: Braidwood Preschool is a one unit, community-based, not for profit Preschool located in the small rural town of Braidwood NSW. We are funded by the NSW State Government, and have been assessed against the National Standards in July 2012.

About me: Kathy Toirkens. I am an early childhood teacher, who holds a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education) and a Director/Nominated Supervisor, with 30 years experience in early childhood education. I am the person named as the Registered Carer for Braidwood Preschool for CCB

Submission on behalf of Braidwood Preschool Assoc:

NQF: Our service fully supports the NQF, and believe that its introduction was a very valuable step in progressing toward quality early childhood education in Australia. It is beneficial to have a national system, and we have found the resources and support provided by ACEQUA to be invaluable.

The introduction of the NQF has **NOT resulted in any cost or fee increases** for our service and the families using our service. Our Preschool has employed university qualified early childhood teachers, on a full time basis, for the past 35 years, so it wonderful to see the importance of qualified early childhood teacher recognised and regulated by the NQF. Also, over the past few years, our other educators had undertaken training to obtain their qualifications, so our service was ahead of the staffing qualifications requirements introduced on Jan 1 2014.

Our service has been assessed against the National Standards and we found this to be a positive experience. We believe that having a Quality Improvement Plan in place, is also a positive step in our journey of self-improvement.

[Evidence: 2009 Fees for 3- 5 year old children: \\$29.50](#) [2014 Fees for 4-5 year old children: \\$30.00](#)

[Staffing as at January 1 2013 \(ahead of NQF schedule\): 2 staff with university qualifications, 3 staff with Certificate III qualifications](#)

Our Recommendation: That there is no modification to the requirements of the NQF and no delay to the timetable for introduction of these requirements.

CCB & CCR: As a Preschool funded by the NSW State Government, parents using our service can claim the Registered Care amount under CCB.

We would like to see the distinction between Approved care and Registered care removed, and the discrimination of working parents who use Preschools for their child's early learning, to end. All parents who qualify and whose children attend a licensed service, employing early childhood teachers, should be eligible for the same amount of CCB and CCR. It is very confusing for parents as to why they are not eligible to receive a reasonable amount of CCB, instead of the small amount of \$0.666 per hour, which they currently receive. Parents also feel it is unfair, that even though they meet the requirements of the work/study test, that they can not claim Child Care Rebate.

Our Recommendation: That all parents who qualify under the work/study test, whose children attend a licensed service, employing early childhood teachers, should be eligible for the same amount of CCB and CCR

State/Federal Government Divide: The delineation between State and Federal Governments in terms of funding early childhood education and "child care" provides many complications for services and families. The distinction between Approved care and Registered care is one. Funding of Preschools and "Child Care services" is another. When governments issues between one and another, it makes it very difficult for families to understand, and for services to provide quality care.

The issue of pay increases for early childhood educators and pay parity (with similiarly qualified school teachers) for early childhood teachers is another issue which has been passed back and forth, resulting in early childhood staff being poorly paid. This low pay makes it difficult to attract and retain staff and needs to be addressed to reach the aim of providing quality early childhood education for all children.

Our Recommendation: That the Federal Government work more co-operatively with State governments for the benefit of parents, children and early childhood staff and services.

Funding/Fees: All families find the cost of fees for their child to attend an early childhood service, to be high. The increased investment in early childhood education by the previous Labour governments did make a difference to

fees, but more investment is needed from both the Federal and State governments. Australia's investment in early childhood education rates poorly on a world comparison. If we wish to raise the education levels of our children, governments need to increase their funding for children younger than school age. We believe Australia should pay for a world class early education and care system that is capable of being admired and revered internationally.

Why do governments provide free education for children aged 4 and 5 years old, when they are enrolled in a school, but not in an early childhood education service? Why do governments fund the wages of teachers employed in schools, but not in early childhood education services? Why does the Government fund 'for profit' early childhood services, but determines that schools who receive funding cannot make a "profit"?

[Evidence: 2 university trained teachers, with 30 years experience, who are paid approx \\$20 000 less pa, than teachers with an equivalent qualification and experience working in a School. Other educators paid between \\$19.48 and \\$23.73 per hour](#)

Our Recommendation: That the Government increase it's investment in "not-for-profit" early childhood education services and fund wage increases for early childhood teachers and educators.

Children with Special needs: There is an urgent need for increased funding and a more streamlined system of support for children with special needs and their families, and the early childhood service they attend. It is often time consuming and expensive for parents to obtain diagnosis, support and early childhood education for children with special needs. Early education services are often the first point of contact, and there can be a long time delay between the child enrolling in the service, obtaining a diagnosis, and securing additional funding to be able to provide for this child's needs. If the system of obtaining funding was streamlined, with the expertise of early childhood teachers being recognised as qualified to identify the special needs of these children, funds, support and resources could be accessed much sooner, resulting in better outcomes for children with additional needs.

[Evidence: A child enrolled and began attending Preschool in March 2012. The child was diagnosed with severe language delay in August 2013 and Autism in October 2013. Special needs funding, of \\$45 per day, commences \(hopefully\) in February 2014.](#)

Our Recommendation: That increased funding and a more streamlined system of support for children with special needs and their families, and the early childhood service, be introduced, as a priority.

Children in Rural and Remote areas: Access to an early childhood service can be a major issue for families in rural and remote areas. More flexible services and funding to support small early childhood services in these areas is vital. Services in these areas often can not enrol the number of children needed to make the service viable, in terms of income covering costs. The Government needs to provide funding to allow these services to provide early childhood education regardless of enrolled numbers, on a cost basis. Also families find transporting their child to and from the service to be a barrier to the child's attendance. This could problem for parents could be resolved by including children attending an early childhood service in the School Transport scheme, and by providing a transport payment for parents.

[Evidence: In our rural Preschool, Parents have transported children up to 60km each way to attend Preschool. Of our 2014 enrolments 53% of the children live 5+kms from town, with one parent travelling 40kms each way.](#)

Our Recommendation: That funding be provided on a costs basis, instead of a per child enrolled basis, to early childhood services in rural and remote areas, which have small enrolment numbers.

That children attending an early childhood service be covered by the School Transport scheme, and by providing a transport payment for parents.