



Independent Schools Queensland
Submission to:

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning,
Productivity Commission Issues Paper
January 2014

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RESPONSE TO OPTIONS FOR REFORM OF CHILDCARE FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Is the distinction between approved care and registered care necessary?

INTRODUCTION

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) is the peak representative body for the independent schooling sector in Queensland. ISQ membership comprises 188 independent schools operating on some 200 campuses throughout the state. Further, over 100 independent schools offer kindergarten programs in either a long day care or dedicated kindergarten setting. Independent schools are autonomous schools governed at the local level. Each school's governing body is responsible for the educational programs offered by the school and the delivery of those programs.

BACKGROUND

In Queensland, the year prior to entering school (Kindergarten) is offered as a program in either a Long Day Care service or within a community or school managed dedicated Kindergarten service. The community or school managed dedicated kindergarten services are more often than not run with similar school terms and hours to the school. In terms of the federal Child Care Benefit (CCB) system, individuals (i.e. teachers or carers) providing the care within the kindergarten can be Registered Carers. Parents with children attending a service with a Registered Carer are eligible to claim only a very small, set amount of CCB and are **not eligible** to access the Child Care Rebate (CCR). These kindergarten services, operating with Registered Carers, are in scope of the National Quality Framework but choose not to operate for 8 continuous hours per days or for a minimum of 48 weeks per year, as do Approved care services.

RESPONSE

The independent sector in Queensland is rich and diverse in its educational offering, as is the early childhood sector. Families have the right to choose a kindergarten program that best suits the needs of their child and the particular needs of their family. Access to Child Care Benefit (CCB) and Child Care Rebate (CCR) should not be the defining motivation for choice.

ISQ believes that the distinction between Approved and Registered Care is unnecessary and disadvantageous to both families and kindergarten services.

Parents are being driven to make childcare and early childhood learning decisions wholly on affordability of care given. This is due to the fact that the normal rate of CCB to which they may be eligible can only be accessed if attending an Approved Care service.

It is apparent that Kindergarten programs offered in both long day care and dedicated kindergarten services are equally engaging, educationally rewarding and collaborative. However, parents who chose the dedicated Kindergarten Service option for their child face increased costs due to being able to access only the very small set amount of CCB funding. ISQ believes that access to the Child Care Benefit for eligible families with children in kindergarten should be equitable.

We therefore recommend that the CCB and CCR funding for Kindergarten be consistent across both dedicated Kindergarten services and long day care services. This will enable parents to make the best educational choice for their kindergarten aged child.

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