

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: childcare@pc.gov.au

24th February 2014

Attn: Presiding Commissioner Wendy Craik and Commissioner Jonathan Coppel

The Parenthood is grateful for the opportunity to make a supplementary submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry (the "Inquiry") into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning.

Following extensive comments from parents in our initial childcare survey, we conducted further research into waiting list fees for early learning centres on February 19th, 2014.

The Parenthood surveyed long day care centres in two Sydney postcode areas: Leichhardt / Lilyfield in the inner west area (postcode 2040) and Penrith in the outer west area (postcode 2750).

Results found a number of early learning centres (particularly those in the higher socio economic area of Leichhardt) are capitalising on the severe accessibility crisis by charging parents non-refundable waiting list fees.

The Parenthood survey found:

Leichhardt / Lilyfield (2040)

- Of the 13 centres listed on the federal government's My Child website, 8 centres (62%) charged a fee for parents to put their child's name on the waiting list.
- Fees in the area range from \$15 - \$100, and in most cases, the fees are per child.

Penrith area (2750)

- Of the 23 centres listed on the federal government's My Child website, only 2 centres (9%) charge a fee for parents to put their child's name on the waiting list.
- Fees in this area range from \$10 - \$50 and in both cases, the fees are per family.

Hundreds of parents from around the country have reported putting their names down on multiple lists due to long waiting list times in their area, particularly in the inner city. It is of great concern that this process, necessary due to a severe accessibility crisis, can cost parents hundreds of non-refundable dollars. Waiting list fees are inequitable and unfair to parents who are desperate to return to work.

Recommendation:

We deeply believe all Australian children should have access to quality early learning – not just those with parents who can afford non-refundable fees. It is for this reason The Parenthood recommends a national ban on waiting list fees.