

To whom it may concern

My name is Emma O'Brien and I am currently the Second-In-Charge at a fantastic Child Care Centre located in Lake Macquarie in New South Wales. Our service has received an overall rating of excellent when it was assessed in relation to the National Quality Framework, which is something that we are very proud of.

The Productivity Inquiry has many great suggestions, particularly with regards to making Child Care costs more affordable for families. It also has many proposals that go against what Early Childhood Educators believe and what we are taught, particularly those educators like myself who have degrees in Early Childhood Education.

The proposed changes 'The qualification of requirement for educators for working with children under three years old should be dropped to Certificate III' and 'The numbers of teachers a service should employ should be based on the number of enrolled children over the age of three' does not recognise the importance of this age group in the development of a child. Many studies have proven that this is the most important stage of brain development in a child's life.

Early experiences provide the base for the brain's organisational development and functioning throughout life. They have a direct impact on how children develop learning skills as well as social and emotional abilities. Children learn more quickly during their early years than at any other time in their life. They need enriching experiences to develop a sense of trust and security that turns into confidence as they grow.

I also hope that when referring to the proposal 'Differences in ratios and qualifications should be eliminated – all states should adopt national requirements' means that we will be able to maintain the ratios that are currently in place or the changes that were due to happen in the new year. I am aware that other states have lower ratios and the number of staff members to children has direct impact on the quality of care being provided.

Also, the removal of preschools from the NQF creates a dichotomous relationship between preschools and child care centres. As a child care centre we fight very hard for recognition in the wider community as a pillar of early childhood education as many people do not view us as a 'real preschool'. By connecting preschools and child care centres through the NQF this creates cohesion, networks and professional opportunities for our industry that have previously been unable to happen. If we are governed under separate bodies this will make it very difficult for these important relationships to continue.

I hope you take these suggestions into consideration when making the final report as I believe that they are the consensus of the early childhood community.

Yours sincerely

Emma O'Brien

12th August 2014