

Dear Commissioner

As a health professional, a mother and a wife I have had need for formal and informal childcare.

When my child was in pre-school, my husband suffered a traumatic injury leaving him unable to work again. As a result of this I was faced with difficult decisions about childcare, financial costs, and remaining in the workforce. I managed to make it through to school years for my child, due to the outstanding help, dedication and flexibility of my family day care lady. Family day care provided me the outside normal hours care that I needed to continue to work.

When my child started school I reviewed the situation and looked at alternatives. I decided to try an “au pair”. My experience was a negative one, and one I would suggest most people experience similar but feel unable to change the situation. When my au pair started the English skills were extremely poor. The au pair had no experience with dressing children, doing up shoe laces, tying up children’s hair; in spite of promises there was experience with all of the same. My child’s hair fell out at school; my child fell over her shoe laces that came undone at school. One day nobody was there to pick up my child from school.

If an au pair has to be trained in basic child care, trained in basic time management skills, and potentially sent for further English training; there is little financial or other advantage having an pair. In addition my au pair had psychosocial and medical issues that were ignored by those who arranged for the au pair to come to this country.

I strongly recommend that whatever path the commission takes, flexibility of child care needs to be included. However flexibility at the cost of quality of care, is not an option. Without training, education and quality guidelines how can we guarantee any level of quality of care for the future generations of our country.