

Submission to the Productivity Commission investigating Child Care in Australia

I have raised 3 children in Australia who are now in their early 20s. During their upbringing we tried to keep my wife home as long as possible while they were young, and I tried to be as flexible as possible with my time to be of help as a husband and father. Living in Australia however is very expensive, and we have had periods where the children variously spent some time in childcare.

Our perception of the experience for the children in the centres was very varied and this had very little to do with the price we paid. Needless to say, that the quality of management and staffing from the child's perspective was often a result of individual personalities but also influenced by the initial motivation for creation of the centre ie those attached loosely to communities or not-for-profit- organizations, or workplaces were more focused on better experiences for the children. **Recommendation : that clear and consistent outcomes be established for the experience of the child, with fun and adventure (and safety) being of importance.**

We went through various stages of our own lives while raising our children. Working singularly, both working, study full time and study part time, which unfortunately is a reflection of the professional demands made upon us in these early decades of our lives, just when we are biologically also rearing children. The last thing one wants is also to have monetary worries, and childcare is certainly a drain and a trap. But whether working full time or partly on government support (eg in my case as a full time student for a bit) it makes plain sense to make childcare fees tax deductible. Isn't it simply sensible that you have to pay money to have someone look after your child so you can go to work so that is a work related expense? I believe this is the single most important thing that can happen. **Recommendation : make child care fees tax deductible.**

In Australia it is a great pity compared with many other nations and cultures that we are conditioned and subjected to a long working life. This is great if you absolutely love your work, or are supported adequately to train for work that you really enjoy, but this is not always the case. With children it is the greater pity that the children's grandparents are often not in a position to spend more time helping out, since they are often working as well. Our parents said to us repeatedly that they would love to spend far more time with grandchildren but their own lives were so busy, often with work. on many occasions they gave up work at their expense to spend time with their grandchildren. **Recommendation : that family child care be assessed for eligibility for support payments as carers, or the cost of their time also be tax deductible.**

I have also worked on childcare centres as an architect. Many of the regulations surrounding the design of child care centres are quite adequate but can always be improved of course. However, the scariest moment I ever witnessed was seeing a builder within the grounds of a childcare centre doing some small task, cutting with an electric saw, and good on him he had his goggles and his ear muffs. Unfortunately the children were 'safely' watching from about 1.5 metres away behind an open wire fence! Hearing damage is lifetime hearing damage! Needless to say I had a word with the builder and the centre. Little bodies need special attention and their susceptibility is far far greater than for adults. How many child care centres are placed on main roads spuing toxic exhausts onto those children all day long? **Recommendation : the placement and activities which may affect children's health must be understood and controlled by centre management before possible harm occurs, whether it is within the centre or not. Risk management specific to children must be understood.**

Lastly, I would prefer if my name for professional reasons was withheld. I stand by all of the statements made here, and would be all too willing to discuss or clarify with Productivity

Commission staff, but as an architect we deal with many community situations and I do not wish to be considered an advocate for any group or cause along the way. My firm has delivered hundreds of community based projects for the private sector and governments in the last few years. I am sure you will understand and treat my submission and contact details as confidential. You may refer to the submitter as 'a registered Queensland architect'.