



To whom it may concern,

I am the principal of a Preschool to Year 6 School in the ACT and am writing in support of recommendation 7.9 contained in the draft Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Review conducted by the Productivity Commission.

Approximately 10 years ago all aspects of the delivery of preschool education was moved across to be managed under the umbrella of the primary school that it was geographically located with. This brought the preschool under the jurisdiction of the primary school and school principals became responsible for the quality of the program, staffing, finance, student support, enrolments and management of the additional building and grounds.

The advantages of this new model were easy to measure and observe. Transition across to primary school became a seamless process, preschool staff were able to access additional whole school professional learning and training and there was greater community involvement and connection that benefitted the entire school community. It also meant that now preschools were included in the 'Validation' school improvement process in existence for all government schools up to year 12.

Currently in the ACT all government schools undergo an external school inspection called 'Validation'. This is a rigorous process that is conducted every four years and shares some similarities with the independent school registration process. It is conducted by an external three person panel made up of a principal from the government system, an independent school principal and deputy principal from another government school. The panel receives training in how to conduct the validation process and how to use the National School Improvement Tool, which is currently being trialled in the ACT this year. An external agency is contracted by the Education and Training Directorate to be the 'lead validator' and acts as a moderator across the ACT. It is a thorough process which includes a desktop review, a three day school visit, classroom observations, analysis of annual school plans and board reports, as well as student performance data from the past 4 years, interviews with parents, staff and students and school satisfaction data. This process includes the whole school, preschool to year 6.

The introduction of NQS into preschool education in the ACT in 2012 created unintended complexity and additional workload for schools. The preschool organisation and program that were part of the existing school improvement process now had to be separated and in some instances isolated and duplicated to meet the new legislative and regulatory requirements. Suddenly school staffs were working to meet and comply with two processes that ran parallel with each other. This resulted in many school staffs experiencing additional workload through the duplication of a school improvement / quality assurance process.

Our school has, like all preschools attached to a government primary school, adopted and implemented the Early Years Learning Framework as the foundation program. The framework is comprehensive and is a highly useful tool.

I was heartened to read the draft Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Review conducted by the Productivity Commission. In particular, draft recommendation 7.9 which removes dedicated preschools (which I am interpreting in the ACT to mean a preschool attached to a primary school and not a long day care preschool program) from the scope of the NQS and returned to governance under relevant education legislation. This strikes me as a sensible recommendation removing the unnecessary duplication of school improvement processes.

I strongly support this recommendation and look forward to focusing our efforts on early years student learning, engagement and development.

Kind regards

Mandy Kalyvas

Principal

Hawker Primary School