

Hello,

I have one child, nearly two years old, in a not for profit long day care centre at Drysdale.

I am extremely concerned with the proposal to reduce qualifications requirements for educators of children aged zero to three years.

Accessing affordable childcare is a big challenge for many families, including mine. As I don't live near family, my child is in care from 8am-6pm, 5 days a week. I have a good job, but am a single parent and have to work full time. I welcome the recognition that the overall level of childcare assistance needs to be increased. Mostly for people who aren't as lucky as me to have a good job.

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds get the biggest benefit from accessing quality early learning and care. It would be a backward step if access to early learning for disadvantaged children became harder.

I expect, if I choose to entrust my children to a formal care environment that I leave them with educators who are qualified to support their individual learning and care needs at a price I can afford.

Saying this, the level of pay provided to qualified child-care workers is very low compared to the importance of their job. The carers at my centre are amazing, and genuinely care for welfare and education of all the children. My child would be far worse off without these incredible women. The fact that they're all women makes this a gendered issue.

My family values quality early learning for children, particularly in the early years before they are three. It's imperative. We want to feel comfortable leaving our children with educators who know and understand the development of my child.

The first three years of life are a vital part of a child's development, having educators who understand and contribute to my child's development is important to me.

If the government is serious about getting women into the workforce after they've had children, as well as caring for our next generation, they must value the childcare industry appropriately (increase pay for qualified child-care workers, as well as ensuring all workers *are* qualified), and be mindful to keep the costs for parents down. It's a tough balance to achieve but it's vital that the government gets it right.

Sincerely, Tanya King.