

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra
ACT 2601

01 September 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to voice my concerns on some of the findings given in your report and its implications to mid-income earners like myself.

As I'm sure many parents before and after me have done so too, I spent a lot of time researching available childcare for my little one long before he was more. I visited many places, interacted with the staff and looked at their facilities, before selecting the childcare for my son.

The key criteria that impacted on my decision included:

- Facilities of the place - including the types of toys, quality of toys
- Level of care provided - this included the staff to child ratio, qualification and experience of the staff and the genuine care given (this is more than a 9-5 job!)
- The standards adopted by the care and most importantly
- The happiness of the child

My son is a coy, introvert who was very timid and had other issues like being underweight etc. From the day I started him at care (with all the worry if it was the right thing to do, or should I stay at home longer and add to the financial burden, but care for him myself) till this day I have had the best experience and will attempt to describe it so that you understand the importance of quality care.

The ratio in the baby room was 4 children to 1 carer and there was always extra help during the meal times making it 2 children to 1. When carers went on break there was always a replacement with proper handover which enabled staff to take a well deserved break and for parents like myself to actually concentrate on work knowing my child was being looked after and was SAFE. 0-12 months is a very challenging age group with lots of crying and cuddling required. This is also the age where everything goes into the mouth or they crawl so fast into trouble that you almost need eyes at the back of your head. I don't believe having lesser staff at any point will enable safe caring. It is a disaster waiting to happen and unfortunately the consequence can be deadly. Productivity at the cost of the child's safety is more stupidity than productivity.

The carers at my Son's childcare worked with me to identify his anxieties, his feeding issues and made recommendations that have worked like a charm. They put back the "care" factor into caring, using their education to help my son come out of his shell. Further the care provided went beyond care into early education. Children learn a lot in these early years, and having qualified carers to enable this learning is vital. There is a difference in the level of care provided at his centre in comparison to many others due to the highly qualified carers and the work conditions of the centre. Happy carers make for happy children. Your report fails to recognise that the role is beyond caring and is one of an early educator.

Having National Framework to work within ensures that parents can be assured of the level of care being given and the centre is accountable to it. Allowing this to be modified would mean having 100s of variations and when something does go wrong (and it will, especially if you are allowed to have less

qualified staff and less ratio of staff at some times in the day) parents like myself will have to spend more time between hospitals and courts in an attempt to hold a centre accountable for its actions.

Asking parents who are already struggling to provide for their family to either pay a premium for what I believe should be the right of every child- quality care and education is not fair or equitable.

I urge to reconsider making such drastic changes.

Our future leaders deserve better from our current leaders.