

I sometimes look with concern at how the government is always wanting to change childcare and how this continually affects not only the families involved but the childcare centres as well. We have already been through the traumatic changes of the Early Years Framework and now another government wants to make changes again. We seem to be at the whim of whatever gov is in position.

I don't usually put in submissions but I do feel quite strongly about a few issues suggested.

My husband and I run a childcare centre in Atherton North Qld which is a rural town west of Cairns. It is a small community of 12000 compared to the larger cities you must continually deal with. I have the following concerns with the new areas in childcare reform the government is looking at:

1. **Only providing Childcare benefits for working Mums.** We have several Mums in our centre that do not work but have the good sense to put their children into care to help them socialise with other children. More importantly however these Mums use our centre as a support for them helping them with child raising problems as many of these Mums do not have family around to support them. We are also ensuring that these children are receiving good support for their development as many of these Mums do not have the knowledge or experience to provide this development support for their children. I am especially concerned with the children who will be going into Prep who come two days a week, preparing them for school. If you cut the childcare benefit to these parents we will have even more children who are going to Prep with no preparation what so ever and this is a huge concern. Two days allowance childcare benefit is sufficient to allow these mums or dads a chance to be able to afford to give their children a good start in life.
2. There are also many **childcare centres who depend on these families to keep them viable.** Unlike the big cities where there are lots more professional women chasing childcare places, in the rural areas all types of families keep the centres going. Do governments even consider Rural areas when making these decisions? Once again allowing non working parents a two day benefit is sufficient to meet many needs.
3. It is also very important that **our working Mums are no worse off with the predicted change to the Rebate system** (which is to be means tested) as many of them are desperately trying to establish themselves with both parents working to try and get ahead and every dollar counts. These are not rich families. The government should be looking the rebate to these families or at least lifting the \$7500 limit as some families, particularly those that come full time often have a couple of months where they have to pay full fees. This is very expensive for these couples and I think totally unfair as those families that only come two or three days have the same limit. It seems to be this Tax paying group that get hit time and time again with every new tax, fee or charge that comes out no matter how it is disguised. The government should be encouraging these young families not draining them all the time. I have some very worried young couples in our centre that are unsure how they will be affected if the new legislation comes in.
4. Also with the new Framework that has already been introduced expecting to have **two teachers by 2020** in a childcare centre is a really big call as we find it difficult to get one teacher, once again in rural areas. Teachers who are graduating are not content to work in a childcare setting or a Kindy as the remuneration is well below teachers normal wages and childcare centres cannot afford to pay higher wages for one teacher, let alone 2. This will have to fall back on the families attending the centres.
5. **Different modes of care.** I have concerns about the qualifications of child carers especially in the form of Nannies if these come under the benefit scheme. If these nannies have the same qualifications as childcare workers and have to be as accountable as childcare centres

for the children they are caring for then I think it is a fair playing field. However, if Nannies come from overseas and they have different standards of qualifications they should then have to restudy to ensure they are up to the Australian standard. There should also be some form of monitoring that these nannies are adhering to a set standard. After all we are looking at caring for our children and ensuring that are reaching a good developmental standard.

6. **I thoroughly agree with grandparents being able to claim some sort of benefit for caring for their grandchildren**, but once again these grandparents need to have some form of qualifications to ensure children are reaching their developmental capacity. Expectations at school are so much higher these days and thanks to the new national curriculum our children are developing at a faster rate and learning more. For this to happen they need to be well prepared before they even enter the school system so whatever kind of care is subsidised by the government it should ensure these children are all catered for.

I hope this is a little helpful as I am not really sure what the government is even looking for but they are my thoughts and the comments from families in my centre.

Regards,

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