

To Whom It May Concern:

Area One:

The contribution of childcare to workforce participation and child development:

This is a question that needs to be looked at over the whole of Australia, that is city, regional, rural and remote areas.

Within cities the cost of living can be significantly higher with housing affordability itself an issue that is facing today's Australian cities. The necessity of double incomes is the only form of housing affordability, the other issue around this is of course the cost of childcare for families trying to save for a home, the cost of childcare which is inhibiting the prospect of being able to afford a home. Government's need to make decisions around their policies about whether we want expensive childcare or do we want a progressive country that is able to move forward in a manageable way, we need strong leadership in this area something of which is lacking. We need leaders who can make decisions that aid the community can work in partnerships with states and that take into account the community not the

For regional areas, each has their own needs, in our area we have cheaper housing, high unemployment, oversupply of childcare services, this presents all sorts of issues for staffing, viability of services, town planning. Care is needed in these areas to promote child development and ensure that children have access to other services when needs arise.

Rural areas again need access to ensure that children have the capacity of socialising and engaging in activities to promote their skills and prepare for schooling.

Remote areas have unique issues, if you live in a mining remote location the cost of childcare is prohibitive and at times places are limited, I have experienced this and workforce participation can be down due to lack of care, also the cost of living in remote areas is extremely higher which means that again double incomes are needed to ensure that families can meet costs.

We are so focussed on the NQF we are missing valuable ways of aiding communities to meet their needs. The needs of all services and communities is very different, access to quality staff is extremely hard and sometimes impossible. The outcomes for children with all these issues facing all services is becoming a barrier to fully aid children to participate in quality programs.

Current and future need for childcare in Australia, particularly given changes in work patterns, early learning needs, childcare affordability and government assistance

The need for childcare in Australia will remain high, it was interesting to note that the government wants affordable flexible care for Australian families and the one service that does this well is Family Day Care, the government has cut this funding causing services to close their doors or significantly cut back on staffing leading to lower quality in this service. I thought it would have been a better idea to pay FDC educators a higher rate to provide more weekend and night care, 24 hour care in LDC does not work and we surely would prefer children to be overnight in a family home rather than a poorly set up and

vulnerable(that is security would be a huge issue for LDC in regards to overnight and weekend care) service such as LDC.

We need a more humane approach to our services, we are seeing the increase in mental health issues with children with families unable to take holidays and hence children being in care for lengthy periods of time. The current need in Australia for childcare is a more organised and responsible approach to our children, we need to ensure there is enough supply without there being under and over supply, this could be undertaken with governments both state and federal being more on board with town planners and willing to take on more control of services. Federal and state governments need to work with a common goal instead of blaming each other the the issues surrounding childcare. The industry needs more on the ground support for children with additional needs, the current ISS system is a joke and is a huge barrier to inclusion, people sitting around computers writing copious amounts of irrelevant and lengthy information is not in any way helping services, children and families address the needs of children. Our service can only afford one ISS worker as the ongoing costs of the additional staff is placing huge demands on our budget.

The NQF missed opportunities as has previous systems, wouldn't it be better to spend that money on the children and have ongoing co-ordinators to support , monitor and aid services to meet quality areas, rather than the systems we have had in place. Such an example of this is the \$200 million training fund, think of the possibilities if we had that money available to spend on the children especially children with additional needs, the online foreign language learning is another wasted amount of funding that again would be better utilised on aiding children meet their milestones with services and resources made available to services. Foreign language learning is a specialist area, online is dodgy as not all services have high speed internet speeds to enable them to undertake this or the technical support to undertake this, really bad idea.

· **the capacity of the childcare system to ensure a satisfactory transition to schools, in particular for vulnerable or at risk children**

This has developed into an interesting area, I have not seen such division in the transition to school in all my years in childcare, we have the schooling system becoming more formal and the early childhood sector becoming even more play based than before, not convinced this is working as the schooling system and early childhood seem to be more apart on ideals than ever before, then you have families who still want their children to know the basics. Vulnerable and at risk children need lots of on the ground support , that is within the service, it would be far more beneficial to have speech therapists, occupational therapists etc. come to services such as they do overseas to assess children and aid staff to implement strategies to have children meet their milestones. At present as previously stated the ISS system is not providing this, vast amounts of money are wasted on paperwork and making new paperwork which is providing barriers for services, families and children to have the support they require. It doesn't probably even need specialists, trained experienced staff could assess children in house then refer onto services that may be available for families to

access. This is what is needed, not mountains of irrelevant paperwork. I would like to challenge Sussan Ley and Tony Abbott to come and fill in an ISS claim... see how they go with that process.

the impacts of regulatory changes, including the implementation of the National Quality Framework, on the childcare sector over the past decade.

I hope the government realises the amount of systems the childcare industry has experienced, loads of paperwork, stress and low paid workers trying their best to meet everyone's needs. There has never been in all those assessment processes a part to which management addresses, that is

1. How much does your service spend on training for staff
2. How much is your toys and resources budget
3. How much is your art and craft budget
4. How do you support staff

This area has never been addressed, we have so much other items that staff need to address which are totally not necessary and again place barriers in the way to prevent staff from interacting with children, management from supporting staff. The changes have been huge and extremely costly, ongoing costs for services are inhibitive. I would like to see the government talk and discuss outcomes with experienced staff who are working at the grassroots level to look at changes. Some so called professionals do not understand how the impacts of what they see as progressive actually on the ground do not work, such as Early Childhood trained teachers, this is not working for many reasons. We need to place the children first and spend the monies on children and staff to ensure that staff are happy to stay in an industry which provides low wages and that children are able to meet their milestones.

The other issue I have as a taxpayer is the corporatisation of childcare, I do object to my tax dollars being used for shareholders and those monies being taken away from children, staff and families, it is so wrong on so many levels, I am watching again the rise of corporates, are we going to have another ABC situation? All services should be Not for profit so as to benefit the children not shareholders.

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