

3 September 2014

To Whom it May Concern

Re: Productivity Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning

My partner and I have two children aged 5 and 2 years old. Our 2yo is currently in a community managed not for profit child care service, which previously our 5 yr old also attended.

I have read the proposed changes to early years services with great alarm. I have a background as a kindergarten teacher (4 year Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood) and although I am not currently teaching kindergarten my partner and I place great emphasis on the importance of our children being in a high quality childcare service whilst we work. I cannot see ever being able to drop my children off at a centre staffed by minimally trained caregivers who do not have the current levels of education and training. If the changes proposed eventuate I would have to give up my job and remain at home until my youngest reaches school age.

In our current service I feel very confident leaving our child whilst I work part time. The staff actively engage our son in a stimulating and caring educational program, planning for his needs and continually extending his development. He is also kept safe and well supervised in a bright and creative environment. When teachers take their breaks we know there are adequate staff to replace them and maintain the current ratios – ratios that the government and DEECD have previously researched and advocated as being optimal. It greatly distresses us to read these hard earned ratios may be reduced down to levels of years ago and that the proposal is considering not replacing staff on breaks. Being both a parent and a kindergarten teacher I am well aware of just how demanding it is to look after multiple young children and I cannot express just how concerning it is to think of there being so few staff to properly supervise AND teach my child. Early childhood care is about so much more than just supervision and nappy changes. The staff are planning and educating these children, helping them develop the skills they will need to thrive in all the areas of their daily community. They require adequate planning and preparation time and breaks to enable them to provide the best possible program and care for our children.

Having Diploma qualified staff teach my children has most definitely meant they blossomed whilst at the service. Their confidence has grown, as well as their sense of community and being part of something positive and enjoyable. They enjoyed a wonderful variety of experiences both creative and cultural, they developed fine and gross motor skills and benefitted from the observations and guidance provided by the National Quality Standards. Indeed the entire community around our centre has reaped the benefits of having a high quality service to access, relationships have developed between the local educational institute, the business community and the families & staff of the centre.

And so in summary, these are our responses to the proposed changes:

- Do not reduce down the standards of education and care for children under 3 years. Keep the current requirements.
- Do not remove eligibility of not for profit providers to payroll tax - this would lead to significant fee increases and would affect our ability to afford care, especially as I work part time.
- Do not allow services to temporarily operate with staffing levels below required ratios, this is totally unacceptable to us.
- Do not simplify the National Quality Standards – quality matters for our child

- Do not introduce funding arrangements that result in reduced access and financial support for vulnerable families and children and for families in crisis.

As parents we are not prepared to compromise the health, learning, well-being, safety and development of our children and firmly do not support the proposed changes.

Kind regards

Nadine van Ree
Rene Stolwyk