

I am a mother of a one year old child and another baby on the way. My child has been attending a wonderful not-for-profit childcare centre in Sydney's CBD since six months of age, four days a week. I have some comments and some serious concerns about some of the Productivity Commission's recommendations regarding Childcare and Early Childhood learning.

My comments and concerns are as follows:

1. The Commission recommends retaining the child care rebate for all families, regardless of means

I believe all women should be given equal opportunity to return to work after having children. Women are already financially disadvantaged due to inequality in salaries and lack of career progression after children. Even for women such as myself earning a relatively high salary, deciding whether to return to work or stay at home with my child was influenced by the cost of childcare, and the associated rebate. Please do not remove an incentive for women such as myself to return to work.

2. The Commission recommends the tax benefits for not-for-profit childcare organisations be removed

My child has attended both a "for-profit" and "not-for-profit" centre, and I can honestly say there was a significant difference in the quality of care and service provided between the two. I believe this is largely attributable to the fact that not-for-profit childcare centres' philosophy is child-centred: their guiding principle is to do the best for the child, independent of profit. They are able to do this because all profits are returned into the organisation, and because they are tax-exempt.

3. The Commission recommends removing the requirement for diploma or teaching staff in under 3's groups

Children under 3 not only require care but also education. Children start learning from the moment they are born, not all of a sudden at 3 years of age!

Further, it is demonstrated through research that:

- Educators holding higher qualifications enable higher quality care, education and relationships in services.
- Babies in lower quality education and care have higher cortisol rates brought on by stress.
- Whenever children are cared for they are learning from the adult providing the care.
- Across the childcare sector it is those educators with the highest qualifications that remain longest in their position, whilst those who are least qualified have the highest turnover rates.

It is likely that

- Reducing the qualifications of babies will encourage the provision of low quality baby services with large numbers of babies.
- Babies, who require long term responsive relationships with their educators will be subject to high volume staff turnover.
- This, in turn, will drive parents such as myself to making the decision to stay at home if I do not feel my child is receiving adequate care!

If I could please also take this opportunity to add a comments regarding the desperate need for more before/after school care and vacation care. While this is not an issue I am currently

encountering, my understanding from other families is that there is a severe lack of this form of care in the community and this is seriously complicating the lives of working parents.

Regards,

A concerned working mother