

I am the mother of two children, and have used not-for-profit child care since February 2011. I worked full-time from then until June 2013, had maternity leave until March 2014 and returned to work part-time then. It is critically important to me that my children spend their days in a place where they are cared for properly. Without good quality child care, I would be very reluctant to work.

In the time my children have attended this university-based not-for-profit centre, the staff have been encouraged by the Coordinator and the Committee of Management to pursue qualifications. There are now four or five Bachelor-qualified educators, and many staff with Diplomas and above-minimum qualifications. Over the last three-and-a-half years I have watched and admired these women combine their own work, study, and families, to get better at what they do. Their efforts have improved the initiatives in care and education of the children, and have raised the morale of the Centre enormously. Given that early childhood care and education is an industry with a notoriously high turnover in staff, the stability at the Centre is remarkable, and is, I'm sure, directly related to the atmosphere in which the staff are encouraged to study and become more and more qualified.

Based on my own experience, I therefore request that the Productivity Commission recommend *against*:

- reducing current standards of education and care by diminishing the requirements for qualifications among staff. That is, keep the current requirements for 50% of educators working with children under 3 to hold a Diploma level or higher qualification. Qualifications of educators are a vital element of high quality education and care;
- a watering-down of the National Quality standards;
- reducing the ratio of staff to children, or allowing such ratios to be worked out over a day or a week (young children need consistent and available care at all times of day);

I would also ask the members of the Commission to reject the possibility of removing the exemption of Payroll Tax for not-for-profit centres. In the Centre my children attend, this amounts to nearly \$100,000 per year, or \$4 per day per child, which is a significant increase.

On a broader level, it is imperative that Australia keep investing in the education of its population – all economists agree that this is essential for continuing increases in productivity. The not-for-profit sector accounts for 5% of GDP and 8% of employment, and social and human services is a growing industry. It is important to ensure that the people who work in this sector are as well educated as possible so that the care provided is of high a quality.

In the case of care of young children, this matters especially because of the importance of learning during the earliest years of life.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these opinions for your consideration.