

To whom it may concern:

I have been a parent at East West Community childcare for four years (with two sons) and look forward to continuing to be a part of the community it has created for years to come (with my youngest daughter). From the very beginning my experience has been positive, enriching, fulfilling and reflective. Our children's carers have been motivated, proactive, thorough, dedicated, compassionate, interested and just beautiful. Raising children is obviously constantly evolving and challenging. I remember thinking my first child wouldn't ever need childcare as he would clearly just stay with me however; when introduced to East West I realised what an invaluable experience for both parents and children it was and continues to be. I observed my shy little boy making friends, trying new art forms and games, playing, learning about and making fresh food, developing his language and resilience, venturing out on excursions without his mum and building his confidence ready to make the transition to kindergarten and now school.

As busy parents rushing in and out we are always given feedback from the day, made aware of concerns with behaviour or friendships and given time to discuss anything we in turn were ever concerned about. My second son started at East West just before he turned 2. From 18 months it had been noted and explored that he was struggling with his language. Not only did our amazing teachers/carers work with him one on one to help him with communication skills but they researched all possible programs available and through extensive reports and enquiry secured funding through Noah at the City of Yarra to ensure extra staff could be made available to give my son ongoing one on one time.

It is invaluable that these difficulties were observed and addressed in my son before he turned three. It is a highly significant age where his lack of language was and could still be in danger of him socially isolating himself and taking those habits into his early schooling years. If staff numbers had decreased or were of lower skill levels there is no way our childcare educators would have had the time to give my son such focus and then deal directly with his paediatrician, speech therapist and early intervention case worker.

It is paramount to the success of generations now and to come that early education is available at this continued high level. Without this environment many issues in our small people will be missed and absorbed into the confusion of them starting school where a young child will be faced with so many new challenges. Knowing my children were in such a professional yet nurturing environment enabled me the confidence to return to the workforce, engage in extra study and care for my new baby when she arrived this year. It would be unacceptable to compromise on any of these standards. All research and practice lead to the understanding of the importance of a child's development in their early years and how essential this development is to later outcomes in life. It is therefore logical and essential that mandatory qualifications for this age bracket are maintained together with significant staffing ratios to ensure a safe, productive environment.

Finally, it is most important to note that even at reasonable childcare fee costs, which many families would be happy to pay more because of our excellent educators; we live in a community where many families face considerable hardships. One of the most enriching aspects of East West is it's mixture of cultures and socio economic backgrounds where children learn to broaden their human experience instead of being forced to conform to a certain 'type'! Threatening to remove these subsidies will only serve to isolate sections of our community further which has short and long term effects for society as a whole. We have to ask ourselves what do we want for our children's future and our society as they are inextricably linked. Early education is the beginning of this essential human journey.

I cannot speak highly enough of the team at East West. I am very grateful for their continued friendship, understanding and patience that my family have been afforded. I would be more than willing to speak further and publicly on these incredibly important issues and on behalf of our most excellent educators and carers.

Yours Sincerely,
Kate Jones