

Dear Productivity Commission,

Thank you for taking the time to produce the report and also for reading my submission. I own a small centre on the south coast of NSW and have a few issues I would like to make a contribution with.

The biggest issue in our rural area is the loss of subsidy for families with one parent who does not work/study/train. These parents are currently only entitled for subsidy for 24 hours of care. If these rural families, taking the time to raise their children, do not receive a subsidy, they will not be able to afford care for their children at all. Most of these families are on a low income as they have chosen a rural lifestyle rather than a higher paid wage in a city environment.

The lack of subsidy goes against the current recommendation that all children receive an early childhood education of 15 hours per week before they attend school. Approximately 30% of our enrollments are in this category of 24 hours which rules out these children attending!

Other than that, I have read that you have considered many factors, which I applaud. I will add my two bob to the original considerations below:

- the contribution of childcare to workforce participation and child development

As the Government is currently encouraging parents to return to work after maternity leave, childcare will need to be more readily available.

- current and future need for childcare in Australia, particularly given changes in work patterns, early learning needs, childcare affordability and government assistance
- the capacity of the childcare system to ensure a satisfactory transition to schools, in particular for vulnerable or at risk children

The NQF covers this sufficiently. Quality Educators can facilitate it with this guidance.

- alternative models of care, including those overseas, which could be considered for trial in Australia
- options - within existing funding parameters - for improving the accessibility, flexibility and affordability of childcare for families with diverse circumstances

This could put more pressure on centre owners. We work way to hard and long as it is!

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

The NQF is good. It was very time consuming to implement in the first place but is easier now. Paperwork and the time to do it is still onerous. Perhaps paperwork funding??? The training funding was a good idea but I haven't seen any money!

I need to get home to my children so that is all I have time for. Thank you.

Fiona Barca

Owner and Director of Gardner Farm Child Care