



Productivity Commission Public Inquiry into Childcare & Early Childhood Learning

Submission from the Children and Families Research Centre, Macquarie University

The Children and Families Research Centre, Macquarie University, is an interdisciplinary research centre established to meet the need for information about how best to support children and their families in Australia.

The Children and Families Research Centre is particularly concerned about the implications of the Commission's recommendations on children and families' access to quality early childhood education programs.

Based on research evidence presented at Macquarie University's 'Giving Children the Best Start in Life' Forum (26 August 2014), we are concerned that if implemented:

- Quality standards, particularly teacher qualifications and ratios, will be weakened
- The early learning and care experiences of young children birth – three years of age will be significantly compromised
- Parents who do not meet a work/study activity test will not be eligible for the proposed Early Care and Learning Subsidy

We consider that these recommendations are likely to lead to:

- Families losing confidence in the quality of formal child care available
- A limiting, if not inhibiting, of the wellbeing and development of children attending formal child care
- Less children from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing quality early learning experiences

With over one million children attending formal early childhood education settings (Productivity Commission, 2013) it is critical that these services be of high quality. A strong evidence base from neuroscience, social science and econometric research unequivocally demonstrates that when formal ECE is of *high* quality, developmental outcomes for children are enhanced and families' wellbeing is promoted. In addition to facilitating workforce participation high quality ECE also ameliorates social disadvantage and fosters social inclusion (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

We call on the Productivity Commission to consider recommendations that will promote, not inhibit, such outcomes for children, families and communities.

The Children and Families Research Centre Advisory Board