

## **Response to Productivity Commission**

From: Wallsend Community Preschool  
Directors – Megan Parkes and Kylie Gribble

Wallsend Community Preschool is a community based not for profit organisation. We have been operating in the local community for over 35 years. Our service has high staff ratios and highly qualified and experienced staff. We employ 3 Early Childhood University trained teachers, 6 educators who are Diploma TAFE trained and 3 Certificate III support staff. We have strong partnerships with the families and children who attend the preschool (approximately 100 children per week) and strong links with other professionals working with the children and families. One of our primary objectives is community engagement; the building of relationships for long lasting benefits, this is well supported by research.

We believe that the interests of children should be central to any policy. We have concerns about some aspects of the Productivity Commission report:

### **Exclusion of Preschools from the National Quality Framework**

We have welcomed and embraced the National Quality Framework, Preschools are an inherent part of Early Childhood Education and not for profit services have been a valued long standing part of many communities. All young children and their families deserve to be within the scope of Quality Assurance. There is much research to support the pedagogy of early childhood services and the National Early Years Learning Framework for Australia outlines best practice for services, we feel the National Curriculum and National Standards are pivotal to supporting quality in Early Childhood services and that preschools should remain under the NQF system. The ratios and staff qualifications in NSW should be maintained to ensure continued quality; we do not find complying with these onerous to our service.

### **Supporting Universal Access**

We believe that support of preschools through Universal Access should continue, however we feel funding a minimum of 12 hours and a maximum of 15 hours per week per child would better facilitate the range of attendance patterns of children in different areas.

### **Children – Care and Education, Qualifications of Staff**

Research also tells us that Early Childhood Teaching qualifications are important for quality in services with all age groups; it enables higher quality care, education and relationships to happen in services, provides for increased responsiveness to children, supports healthy development of school readiness, improves outcomes in literacy and numeracy and has a positive impact on learning. Whenever children are cared for, they are learning from the adult providing that care.

As Teachers with formal degree qualifications with many years of experience and also parents of young children who have accessed both long day care and preschool we are particularly supportive that children under 3 years of age have high quality educators that have completed formal training. We have worked with all age groups from 0 to 6 years in our careers and we support the direct link between staff qualifications and quality of care and education. We have concerns regarding the Certificate III qualification and the reduced delivery time of courses and minimum practicum. Separating out care and education does not work; this is a very concerning element of the draft report.

In Out of School Hours Care services we support that there are mandatory qualifications required and that they have quality assurance standards in line with Early Childhood services.

### **Community Based Model**

Not for profit services deliver high quality education and care, provide more education and care for children with additional needs and are effective in meeting the needs of children and families. There has been a rapid pace of changes over recent years which have placed increasing pressure on services and although we have embraced the elements of NQF and adjusted to new funding models this pressure is exacerbated by the low standing given to Early Childhood teachers on the issue of pay parity and lack of funding commitment by governments. We support increased wages for all staff working in early childhood.

The staff and Management Committee of our preschool want to continue to operate the early childhood service without quality being reduced. We feel the recommendations regarding preschools are very difficult for NSW community based preschools; especially removal from the NQF and the removal of registered care element of CCB for our families.

We are advocating to ensure the best outcomes for children, their families and the not for profit education and care sector. The goals should be to find solutions that effectively cater to the needs of children, requirements of parents and the workforce that provides the education and care to young children.