

The Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2600

childcare@pc.gov.au

T 4223 1100
F 4223 1150
E info@iacc.com.au
W www.iacc.com.au

Unit 2, 210 Shellharbour Road
Warrawong NSW 2502

ABN: 87 002 974 076

Dear Commissioners

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further comments on the *Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Draft Report*.

Illawarra Area Child Care Ltd (IACC) is a not for profit community owned organisation committed to the provision of quality education and care services in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions. IACC also manages the Early Childhood Training and Resource Centre (ECTARC) which specialises in early childhood training and professional development across Australia.

Established in 1984, the organisation has worked successfully with associated organisations to provide excellence in early childhood and training services.

Today, our vision is to be the provider of choice in accessible, dynamic, affordable and engaging early childhood settings and training services and it is in this context that we give the following feedback on the draft report.

Families using mainstream services

- We believe all children should have access to high quality education and care services that improve their learning outcomes regardless of the service type.
- The best interests of children should be the focus of early education and care service delivery.
- We support the draft recommendation to streamline government funding into one single child-based subsidy.
- The subsidy should assist ECEC services that meet the requirements of the NQF.
- Further consideration needs to be given to the level of deemed cost as this is critical in determining affordability and access for all families.

Additional needs children and services

- We value the benefits of integrated services to improving better health and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable children.
- We recognise the need to fund culturally-appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and care services.

- The SNAICC study titled *The Journey to Big School* confirms the importance of targeted early childhood services and the role they play in improving school participation rates and performance.

Preschool

- All types of early childhood education and care services should be included in the NQF to ensure positive outcomes for children, such as in-home care delivered by FDC schemes, mobile services, occasional care and multipurpose/integrated services.
- Preschools should remain within the scope of the NQF as their inclusion supports a consistent National approach to best outcomes for children.

Workforce participation

- The future focus of early education and care policy should be on the effectiveness of high quality early education and care not workforce participation of parents/carers.

Quality assurance processes and regulation of ECEC

- We believe that children aged birth to three years require educators who have skills above the certificate III to lead the program and routines.
- We strongly recommend the Commissioners consider the overwhelming feedback from across the sector regarding the importance of having highly qualified educators working with children under 3 years of age. This feedback is based on highly qualified professional knowledge, skills and experience.
- In IACC services we have a team of educators working with the under three's which include Certificate III, Diploma and early childhood teacher qualifications ensuring the quality of the care provided is underpinned by a higher level of theoretical knowledge and skills relevant to this age group. Fees in our services are the same for all age groups, the average cost is \$90 per day.
- We support the maintenance of all qualification requirements including the, number of qualified staff, staff to child ratios and grouping sizes at all times.
- Any proposed changes to qualification requirements would need to be supported by sound research and consultation with the sector.
- We strongly support the guiding principles of the NQF.
- The National Quality Standard (NQS) was informed by research on best practice.
- According to the DEEWR publication *Child Care in Australia, August 2013*, the NQF has been rolled out without any significant increase in fees.

- We believe the NQS provides a benchmark for measuring all service types regardless of their model of delivery or management
- The quality assessment and rating system allows educators, families and communities to reflect on and improve their practices.
- NQF educator qualification requirements are informed by research such as the OECD (2012) *Starting Stronger III: Early Childhood Education and Care*.

IACC embraces continuous improvement and the benefits it brings to children, families, and communities.

Yours sincerely

Jan Langtry
CEO