

I thank you sincerely for this opportunity to address the Productivity Commission.

As a passionate advocate for early childhood education, I feel the proposals to water-down this vital area of education for life is devastating.

In my 30+ year career as an educator and social activist - Kindergarten and Primary teaching, secondary LOTE teaching, massage teacher, mentor, teaching at TAFE, University lecturing, residential youth worker, and owner of an integrated Long Day Care centre with a Government-funded Kindergarten, I have witnessed the incredible benefits of quality early childhood programs, and, conversely, the negative association of maladapted bonding and attachment.

Children deserve the best possible education and care, in whatever setting best suits their families' needs.

Early childhood educators deserve wages befitting their vital role in assisting a child to develop to their true potential, thereby shaping a child's destiny.

Could I please draw the attention of the members of the Productivity Commission to the "Australian Government, Australian Institute of Family Studies report on the Efficacy of Early Childhood Interventions"

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/resreport14/aifsreport14.pdf>

This report demonstrated that "the cost-benefit analysis indicated that the benefits totalled \$108,002 per child while costs totalled \$12,356 per child.

This is equal to a saving of \$8.74 for every \$1 spent.

The cost-benefit analysis also indicated that the net benefits remained large even when any one of the benefits was excluded, or if all benefits were reduced by half."

PriceWaterhouseCoopers has released a report which demonstrates how investment in quality early childhood education and care delivers long-term economic and social benefits to Australia.

To ensure children get the best start in their educational journey we must attract and retain highly qualified and experienced early childhood educators by paying them a fair and attractive salary.

Scandinavian countries, perceived to be delivering the best early childhood services in the world, values and respects their educators, and encourages them to attain their Masters, rather than one of the ideas touted by this Commission to actually reduce minimum qualifications for educators working with the birth-two years age group - the optimal time for bonding and attachment to occur.

An infant's experiences and the quality of infant-educator relationships, impacts dramatically on brain development and function, and promotes optimal neurological, social, emotional and psychological development.

Many longitudinal studies show the benefits of bonding and attachment, and the vast socially-devastating consequences that generally do occur if this bonding is absent or incomplete - including a significantly higher percentage of

- mental health issues
- divorce
- school absenteeism
- unemployment
- intimacy issues
- aggression
- alcohol and drug use
- criminal behaviour
- and a range of social and emotional issues

As Bowlby states, "Attachment behaviour is held to characterize human beings from the cradle to the grave."

As evidenced during my years within the juvenile justice system, programs to reduce or prevent juvenile delinquency have been generally unsuccessful. The risk factors which make a child prone to delinquency are based in too many systems, including the individual, the family, and community networks, to make isolated treatment methods effective. Longitudinal studies of early childhood programs suggest they help to reduce future delinquency. These programs take an ecological approach to enhancing child development by promoting overall social competence in the many systems impacting on children. Not engaging in criminal acts is one indicator of competence that is related to others, such as being successful in school and in personal relationships.

The influence of the first few years of life on child health and development, educational attainment, and economic well-being is enormous. The great majority of physical brain development occurs by the age of three. Therefore early childhood provides a window of opportunity for enriching input and a

window of vulnerability to poverty and dysfunctional home environments. This Government has the opportunity to promote healthy child development, which in turn leads to healthy adults.

The decisions the Productivity Commission make have the potential to shape the future of Australia's citizens. Please make decisions in the best interests of these precious young people. We need to build strong, altruistic, resilient, socially productive future citizens by ensuring they have access to quality early childhood settings who engage in best practice.

Thanking you sincerely,

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