

Bourke & District Children's Services

Submission on the Productivity Commission's Draft Recommendations

Draft Recommendation 12.2 & 12.4

Our experience is that the current system is difficult for parents to navigate and difficult for Centrelink to fully understand. We find our local Centrelink Office in Bourke gives conflicting advice to parents and we have to direct parents back to Centrelink more than once. Having one payment would be less onerous to explain and administer.

Currently Child Care Rebate (CCR) is payable to the parent when a liability for fees has arisen. There is no incentive for the parent to pass CCR on to the centre if they choose not to do so. It would make sense to make this payment directly to the service provider.

Our service is located in a remote location and has a concern regarding the 'deemed cost of care'. Will there be any differentiation in the amounts of 'deemed cost' considering the variation in the cost of living in different areas?

Draft Recommendation 5.1

Attendance is an issue within our Preschool that requires continual work and expense. Our local schools also experience the same problem. Enrolment in preschool and school is important in our community however actual attendance is much less important. As attendance is the most basic building block in education, in that a child cannot begin to learn if not attending regularly, it would be good for families to have an incentive to make sure their child attends each day.

Draft Recommendation 7.9

The importance of play based learning in the early years has been acknowledged. Preschools have worked hard to implement the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Standards. The quality of education provided by preschools, certainly ours, has increased. It would be a shame to move away from the National Quality Framework when so much hard work has gone into implementing a system that is working.

Draft Recommendation 12.9

In terms of encouraging an extension of school services to include preschool, what does this mean for community based preschools that are an accepted part of the community and running very well? Our fear is that it would lead to those of a low socio-economic background attending the cheaper/free school based preschool and those of higher means attending the community based preschool. Overall this could lead to divisions within the community.

Draft Recommendation 7.4 & 8.1 & 8.2

There is such diversity in the qualifications and child/staff ratios required in early childhood settings, outside school hours care and school for the same age children. It would be helpful to have similar qualifications and ratios for services offering care and education to the same age groups.

One of the issues encountered within our community is the lack of outside school hours care for working parents. A local school offers 'Active After School' however this is not available to preschool aged children. Our LDC has had to restrict outside school hours care to preschool children as we have insufficient places. This will pose a problem next year when we will have 13 preschool children enrolled. Our centre is limited to 39 places and is not able to offer 13 of these as outside school hours care.

Draft Recommendation 7.2

It is an acknowledged fact that children learn from a very young age. This learning is aided and directed by staff with suitable qualifications. A Certificate III in Early Childhood Care and Education is sufficient for those staff charged with the main care and who assist in the educational program however it is not sufficient for those who lead the educational program and practice of a centre. This area requires more knowledge than a Certificate III. A Room Leader should be a Diploma level minimum and there should be access to a qualified ECT within a centre for children of all ages.