

Our ref: TB: 1074771E/140829

5 September 2014

Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra ACT 2601

By email: childcare@pc.gov.au

Dear colleagues

Re: Further submission - Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Public Inquiry

Just like a lot of people who live in my electorate of Griffith, my husband and I both work jobs with long and unpredictable hours. That makes managing our responsibilities to our two young children – aged 2 and 4 – a challenge. At varying times we have met that challenge through kindy, long day care, in home care, and by prevailing on our own generous and caring parents – our children’s grandparents.

So like a lot of people in my electorate, I have first hand experience of the issues referred to in the draft report for this inquiry. Accordingly, I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in response to that draft report.

I don’t intend to respond to specific recommendations. I write to make the following broad observations.

As [Prof Barbara Pocock](#) has said, work and family policy requires “a balanced policy approach: one that walks on more than one leg – responding to the intensive demands of early childhood that reach beyond the moment of birth – to ensure quality care for children and flexibility in workplaces.”

In other words, and as the Commission is aware, in order to meet diverse and sometimes competing aims such as:

- better early childhood education;
- more involvement of parents in their children’s early lives; and
- greater participation in the workforce for parents (and particularly women) of childbearing age,

no policy setting can be considered, or operate, in isolation.



MEMBER FOR GRIFFITH

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I note that the government has asked that options within the present funding envelope be considered. That is disappointing because the government, at the same time as asking you to come up with improvements to early childhood education and care within the existing funding envelope, has yet to drop its extravagant income-replacing publicly funded paid parental leave scheme.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has indicated that scheme will cost \$62 billion over ten years.

Australia already has a workable paid parental scheme – the one that Labor introduced following the Commission’s 2009 report.

The existing scheme is fair, in that it pays everyone the same amount, and is affordable, in that it balances the benefits of paid parental leave with the costs to taxpayers.

In other words, given that there is clearly – given your draft report – a strong appetite for improving access to affordable, quality childcare and early education, why would the government not rethink its expensive paid parental leave scheme?

I wish the Productivity Commission the best with its endeavours in preparing its final report. And I express optimism that Australia’s parliament will be able to implement policy that:

- continues to support parents immediately after childbirth and/or adoption;
- provides for accessible, quality, affordable childcare and early learning;
- allows for workplace flexibility of the kind that supports parents’ wishes, allows them opportunities to be more “hands-on” in raising their kids; and
- promotes the elimination of discrimination on the basis of parental status and/or family responsibilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

Terri Butler MP
Federal Member for Griffith