

Somers Primary School conducts its own OSHC. The Service is administered by the School Council and all monies are processed through the school. There are educators employed in the program and we have relief staff on hand for emergencies. The numbers vary daily from a minimum of three to a maximum of thirty.

While this service welcomes some of the draft recommendations of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood learning, such as implementing a nationally recognised working with children check, and the requirement for all schools to take responsibility for organising the provision of an outside school hours care service where there is sufficient demand, we do not believe they should arrange for an outside provider to make use of school facilities. There are a huge amount of benefits to the children, families and school community when the OSHC service is run by the school.

Obviously affordability is a major concern to our families. Because we are a not for profit service we are able to offer substantially lower rates than other privately run services. There is also a reticence of private providers to adopt our program due to our relatively low numbers and remote location. This effectively means if we were forced to outsource to a private provider we may not be able to offer the service at all which would be a huge disadvantage to our school community.

The funds that come in to this program, and the expenditure from the program, are closely monitored by the Principal, Business Manager, School Council and the Program Co-Ordinator. The school benefits greatly from this with new equipment and resources being purchased and able to be shared by all. Some of these purchases have included a full set of Listening Post resources, soft furnishings and electronic appliances for the shared general purpose room, an autism resource kit and various educational supplies and regular access for our staff to high quality Professional Learning. The OSHC is integral to the school community as this is a small, coastal village where parents may travel long distances to their workplace. Most of our families utilize the service for all their primary school age children which leads to increased links to the school community and provides our families with a valuable support resource which is vitally important in our essentially isolated community.

This service believes it is obvious that OSHC ratios need to be different to class ratios because of the age range and fluctuating numbers. School classes cater for one age group where the teacher forms relationships over the course of a year of day to day contact, whereas OSHC caters for the entire age range and different children on a casual basis within the school. On any given day in our service we need to cater for children from Prep through to Grade six with at least one funded child included.

Staffing ratios should be maintained at the current scale. This is essential to the children receiving the care required in the OSHC setting. We strongly believe children's safety and welfare would be seriously jeopardised if changes were made to this ratio.

We also feel that qualifications should remain the same as they are at the moment. This ensures the quality of care comes from a professional and trained person, who has the knowledge and expertise to provide a program that is stimulating and safe to the children in their care.

We currently have one fully qualified Co-ordinator, with another person's training almost completed to become qualified as a Co-ordinator. All our staff has early childhood or education related qualifications. This has led to the successful development of a constantly evolving program to engage and excite our children in a way that we are very proud to offer the school community.

We have always subscribed to the fact that the National Quality Standards ensure that the health, safety, wellbeing and learning of children is not jeopardised. It is essential that these standards are maintained for this reason.

A strong partnership exists between the school and the OSHC program – discussion and implementation of policies, processes for recording and receipting payments from parents, templates for paperwork to ensure that documentation is on hand for any circumstance that may arise. Some of these may include specific children's asthma plans, children with dietary requirements, allergies, epilepsy, behavioural problems and toileting procedures to name but a few.

The school has an enormously strong family bond with the children attending the program and their parents. Children with special needs receive funding assistance to enable them to become part of the program. In our small, rural setting the service also has strong links to local community groups such as the CFA, pre-school, local sporting clubs and the Foreshore committee. The value the school community places on our service is constantly reinforced not only by management and staff, but also by positive feedback from our parents.

Our community is not prepared to compromise the health, safety, well-being or learning and development of our children which is why we cannot fully support the Draft Report in its current form. Thank you for this opportunity to submit our issues of concern.