

New England ECA Branch  
c\ - School of Education  
University of New England,  
ARMIDALE, NSW, 2351

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing on behalf of the New England regional branch of Early Childhood Australia based in Armidale, NSW.

As a branch of committed early educators representing regional children, families and communities, we have a number of serious concerns in relation to the findings of the Productivity Commission Report findings and draft recommendations. We ask that the following matters be given due consideration:

1. Any changes to the early childhood education sector be based and be congruent with the principles underlined by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. We propose that children should be considered central to any changes and amendments that are made. We strongly emphasise that children have the right to funded affordable quality early childhood education.
2. We state emphatically that there should not be changes made to “dilute” the NQS.
3. Current qualifications and ratios must not be altered. Research evidence points to the significant brain development in the early years of life, particularly when children are offered optimal rich experiences and high quality secure interactions with meaningful caregivers. We implore the committee not to promote discriminatory practise through the suggestion of inferior qualified educators with the under three age cohort. Instead, we ask that funding to continue to assist educators to gain higher qualifications be continued. Particularly, we ask for continued funding of prospective family day care educators.
4. The Australian Government investment in early childhood be brought up to par with that of the OECD. Currently, the Australian Government’s investment is one third of this amount in the early childhood sector.
5. The concept of early childhood education and care should not be separated into early education and other services providing child care. Early childhood education and care is a holistic approach reflecting the multiple and diverse ways that children learn through rich everyday experiences. Thus, there should not be division of differing services to those offering “care” and those offering “early childhood” services.
6. Changes to Community Support Funding proposed for next year and the impact that this may have on the financial viability of our regional services, including the local regional family day care service. Some services have already had staff cuts impacting of their availability and accessibility by families.
7. Deemed costs of services do not adequately reflect services’ changing needs to best support young families and children and will further impact on services’ financial viability.
8. Sustainability in services and related standards as depicted in the NQF remain.
9. Equity must be maintained for families and children to access and participate in their local neighbourhood early childhood services. A service’s availability to children should not be depended on a parental activity test.

In conclusion, we ask that the committee duly upholds their responsibilities in ensuring an Australian “fair go” for all Australian families and children in implementing changes towards a rights based early childhood and care system.

Sincerely,

Anne O’Donnell-Ostini

(on behalf of the New England Regional ECA network)