



Broadside BRIEFING

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PRODUCTIVITY INQUIRY: what will it mean?

What is the purpose of this *Broadside Briefing*? Community Child Care (NSW) understands services often need a quick snapshot of an issue. In this *Briefing*, we offer our initial thoughts on the upcoming Productivity Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care sector, and ask our members about their views. Tell us what you think!

WHAT IS THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY?

One of the first acts of the incoming Coalition Government was to request that the Productivity Commission undertake a far-ranging inquiry into childcare and early childhood learning. In this *Broadside Briefing*, we outline:

- why the Inquiry is important;
- how you can contribute to both the CCCC response and also directly to the Productivity Inquiry;
- Community Child Care's initial position; and
- what political forces will be at play.

The Productivity Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning has been called a 'once in a generation' opportunity to change the future of early education and care in Australia. Let's make sure this is a change for the better for children, families and the community.

—Leanne Gibbs,
Chief Executive Officer
Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW)

Who else will be making submissions to the Commission?

The Productivity Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning is a big deal. The Inquiry will receive submissions from businesses, women's groups, nanny agencies, tax reformers, state and territory governments and a range of other interested parties.

All these groups have particular viewpoints, so it is very important for the early education and care sector to engage with the Inquiry. Our sector has a lot of experience in care and education for young children. We understand what children need and we know what early education and care provision should look like.

This is why we need to speak up and  **SPEAK OUT**

SUPER SUMMARY

The Productivity Commission has released a great [Issues Paper and Community Child Care \(NSW\)](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare/issues) urges you to read it. You can download it from www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare/issues

Here is our attempt at a super summary of the main questions being raised by the Inquiry.

What is the Productivity Inquiry about?

It's about establishing a sustainable future for a more flexible, affordable and accessible childcare and early childhood learning market that helps underpin the national economy and supports the community, especially parents' choices to participate in work and learning and children's growth, welfare, learning and development.

What will happen because of the Inquiry?

The Commission will make policy recommendations to ensure the above happens and possibly improve early childhood education and care regulation and funding for the good of Australia as a whole.

Which services are included in the Inquiry?

Services in scope of the NQF, including (OSHC, preschools, LDCs, FDCs), as well other ECEC services, including BBS and services out of scope of the NQF.

The Inquiry is asking a range of questions, including

1. What outcomes from early childhood education and care (ECEC) are desirable over the next decade?
2. What roles should government play in ECEC?
3. Any international models worth implementing?
4. Is there a demand/supply mismatch? Is flexible care needed?
5. What types of ECEC systems work?
6. Effect of entry age and enrolment on children's learning?
7. The school day – should this be extended?
8. How important is accessibility, flexibility, affordability and quality to parents?
9. Why is there an increased demand – workforce participation or service availability?
10. How do parents find services?
11. What are employer's views on assisting staff to access childcare, and what issues do they have?
12. How has the sector responded to growth in demand?
13. What are the viability pressures?
14. What are the barriers to expansion in ECEC services?
15. Who meets needs of additional needs children and how well are these needs met – could it be done better?
16. Which service types work well where?
17. Cost issues. Price competition, family financial issues, etc?
18. What are the benefits and costs of current regulations?
19. What are the effects of increased staff ratios and qualifications for children?
20. Are services OK with the pace of new ratios and what are cost impacts to services and families?
21. Workforce shortages and qualifications – who is doing what and is it working?
22. Is the NQS clear enough for providers?
23. Is MyChild useful for families?
24. NQF: its impact on structure, operations, cost and profitability?
25. Are services changing provision because of the NQF?
26. What are the regulatory burdens?
27. How could the NQF and other regulations be improved (implementation and enforcement)?
28. Are there cheaper ways to achieve ECEC regulatory objectives?
29. Would self-regulation work?
30. What type of effect is there from government support to families and childcare providers?
31. Is the level of overall government support for ECEC appropriate?
32. Is government support effective and clear for families and services? Could there be any improvements?
33. Is the distinction between approved and registered care necessary?
34. Should support be paid directly to parents or to services?
35. What are the advantages and disadvantages of different payment models?
36. What are the tax deductibility issues?
37. Should we fund additional childcare types?
38. Funding: how can it be rationalised and streamlined?

How can you and your service **have your say?**

It is **REALLY** important that educators, early childhood teachers and services with experience in early education and care provision contribute to the Productivity Inquiry. Community Child Care (NSW) also wants to know what you think so that our submission represents our member's views.

So, here is how you can speak up:

Don't like writing?

Record a video for CCCC

Grab your smartphone, iPad or webcam, record a short video, then upload it at: www.cccnsw.org.au/pi by 17 January. We will watch them all, and send some directly to the Productivity Commission.

Want to write but don't have time?

Send a proforma email

Community Child Care (NSW) has drafted a proforma email to send to the Commission. If you agree with it you can just send it off, or adapt and send. Go to: www.cccnsw.org.au/pi

Want to write, but quickly?

Send a brief comment

There is a 'send a brief comment' link on the right side of the Inquiry website: www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare/issues Parents and staff can use the link to have their say informally and quickly.

Want to say a lot?

Write a full submission

This enables you to respond to the Commissions' questions raised in their issue paper and provide a more in-depth response.

To send your videos, submissions or comments go to: www.cccnsw.org.au/pi before 17 January!

Submissions to the Productivity Commission need to be provided by **Monday 3 February 2014. If you intend to send a video to Community Child Care (NSW), please do it before **Friday 17 January** so we can include your comments in our submission.**

What about FAMILIES?

The commission wants to hear from families too. Why not set up a computer or an iPad in your service to enable families to make a quick submission?

Download the three-page summary of the Inquiry and include it in newsletters or email to families at your service. See: www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare/issues

What's at stake?

What does Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW) think services should explore in their submissions? We are interested to hear your responses to a number of key areas:

- 1** The child must always be the starting point for working out what education and care system Australia should have.
- 2** Every child should have the right to affordable early education.
- 3** Early education should be as valued as all other levels of education in Australia.
- 4** Early education and care access should be about more than who minds children for working parents. Undoubtedly, early education and care services increase women's participation in the workforce but this should not be the goal of an early education system.
- 5** Schools are funded directly, so should early education and care services be. Funding quality early education and care services directly is more cost-efficient than funding parents through CCB and CCR.
- 6** There must be national planning to ensure there are services where they are needed, that does not rely on market forces alone.
- 7** Capital funds must be made available to ensure that new education and care services can be developed and the infrastructure maintained in existing ones.
- 8** To have a great education and care system, we need better remunerated educators.
- 9** The benefits of the National Quality Framework and regulation of the sector clearly outweigh other impacts, including costs.
- 10** We need to fund professional learning and support for the implementation of the National Quality Framework and other regulations.
- 11** We need to stop the division between education and care. The Commonwealth should be responsible for funding all early education and care, including preschools, and this funding should all be administered by the Commonwealth. There is too much leakage of funds in duplicating systems of professional development, special needs funding etc.
- 12** No school in Australia can receive public funding if it is designed to make a profit – likewise, no tax dollars should go to for-profit early education and care.
- 13** Quality of early education must be prioritised and paid for by government as part of our country's education expenditure.
- 14** We need to invest a larger percentage of Australia's GDP to pay for a world class early education and care system.
- 15** There are lessons we can learn from other countries' early education and care provision.

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK THE
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
SHOULD CONSIDER**

Send us a video: go to
www.cccnsw.org/PI
Or call us: 02 8922 6444