

Mr John Carter  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

I don't know how I missed this inquiry, but I have just read about the inquiry nearing its conclusion. I believe submissions are now closing 31 August 2009.

I am very concerned that this inquiry has taken place at all. I have had two children in child care (the youngest still at childcare until end of 2010) for a total of 5 years now. As a parent, I have been very comfortable with the standards of care given to my children.

My son, who is midway through Grade 1, was well prepared for his prep year after leaving a C & K child care centre (Queensland).

My daughter (turning 4), who is currently at a private child care centre (we moved house otherwise would have stayed at my son's centre), is being well cared for and is very happy to be there. She is learning things in a happy, playful way, and we are very satisfied with her care and education at the current standard.

I don't understand the concept that the Senate Inquiry is trying to fix something that, quite frankly, isn't broken.

I don't believe our children need a higher ratio of carers. I have not come across any situation where I have thought more carers were needed per room.

I also am not thrilled with the idea of trying to ram even more education into children at ever decreasing ages. I would like our children, and Australia's children, to have a stress-free childhood. I would like our children to enjoy themselves as much as they can before they hit the enforced education years of primary and secondary schooling.

I can see in the future, that if the Inquiry's recommendations cause significant increases in child care costs, the undesirable result could be that more children are withdrawn from child care creating a huge disparity in abilities of prep year children as children from child care will be way ahead in abilities than children who did not go to child care. And I do not agree that preschool children should be pushed to a higher level before reaching Prep year.

In fact, unless child care is made compulsory, the proposal to enhance education of preschoolers will indeed create a divide between the haves and have-nots. People with jobs and who can afford the possible increase in child care fees should the proposals succeed, will have children advanced beyond their years, while the poor people who will not be able to afford childcare, or who choose not to use child care, will have children who are at a disadvantage.

What then happens in the Prep Year? Do you teach at a level the non-child care children are at - and make the child care graduates bored to tears? Or do you teach to the child care graduates - and make the non-child care children feel inadequate and ruin their confidence as they work their way through school?

There is nothing wrong with the status quo. Yes, there are some centres that are not up to scratch. The solution, though, is to make them reach the current standards, not force the good centres to reach even higher standards. The current standards are very good as they are.

The Senate should concentrate on something that **is** broken. There is plenty to choose from - health, primary and secondary education - to name a few. Child care is great as it is.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Robert Polman