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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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**Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Inquiry into the Provision of Childcare**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a late submission to this important Inquiry.

My submission is on behalf of myself as a user of the child care system – the Out of School Hours Care/Vacation Care system.

While I understand the impetus for this Inquiry came from the collapse of ABC Learning and its impact on childcare provision for pre-school children, I want to bring to you attention what I consider as the 3rd phase of child care needed to support working families raise their children and engage in the paid workforce.

In my case, however I am a grandmother who has the full time care of my 8 year old grandson. I am also working full time. I am 57 years old and typical of many women have a very small superannuation saving. While I would prefer to be able to work part time I need to make the most of my current earning capacity to support myself in retirement.

I would not be able to manage my current situation without using the OSHC/Vacation Care system. I must admit I was shocked when I returned to this system 4 years ago to find it was still so poorly resourced and inflexible.

OSHC/Vacation is essential to our lives. In fact I changed my grandson's school after his first year at school to another school in the area because it offered a better OSHC program.

The main point of struggle with the previous schools program was:

- The strict pick up time of 6.00 pm.
- This program required 1 weeks cancellation notice to a booking otherwise the normal fees were charged.

- Quality of care - Kids always watched television in the before school care and when I picked him up they were again watching television. It seemed like the TV was the babysitter for at least some of the time, rather than engagement of the kids in activities.

The Before/After School program at our current school operates until 6.30 pm. This ½ hr makes all the difference for us. I am able to take him to school in the morning, get into work by around 9.15 – 9.30 and then leave work by 5.30 to pick him up. I'm usually there just after 6.00 pm but am more relaxed if I am delayed leaving work or there are delays in public transport.

Our program is also located in a spare room and at times around 50% of the school population access after school care. When a program is in such high demand it needs its own purpose built facilities and better staff child ratio and age related activities and spaces for, eg homework space or reading.

While I am very happy with what our program offers within its funding constraints I believe the whole OSHC/Vacation Care system needs to be reviewed in the context of an essential support system for families and single parents/ or grandparents such as myself in balancing paid work and caring.

Despite a better Before/After School program I still struggle with Vacation Care, which does not operate at our school. I am not able to take school holidays off as I don't have 10 weeks annual leave each year. While he is happy to go to the Before/After School program at his school he is often very reluctant to go to the vacation care program run by a different provider in a different location. This makes things very difficult and I feel guilty every time I have to send him.

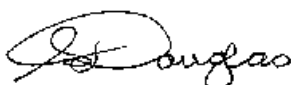
I also pay 60% of the rate under the CCR calculation, because of my salary which for the first time in my working life is more reasonable.

It takes 18 years to raise a child. Please don't just focus on childcare for pre-school age children.

Please ensure a review of the OSHC/Vacation Care system is an outcome of the current inquiry and that the system also incorporates the first couple of years of secondary school as well.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely



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