



410 CLARENDON STREET SOUTH MELBOURNE 3205 TELEPHONE (03) 9209 6265

WEBSITE: www.clarendonchildrenscentre.com.au

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**Submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry
Early Years Quality Fund Special Account Bill 2013.**

The Management Committee of Clarendon Children's Centre Co-operative wishes to express support for the establishment of the Early Years Quality Fund. We believe that government funding is necessary to support professional wages for early childhood educators and we applaud this initiative which will assist services to provide affordable, high quality education and care for babies and young children.

Clarendon Children's Centre is proud of our record of providing pay and conditions which assist us to recruit and retain skilled and qualified educators. However, since salaries and related costs represent close to 85% of our annual operational expenditure, any wage increases we award to staff necessarily require significant fee increases for our families.

We are also proud of our long standing reputation for providing high quality education and care for the children who attend our centre and we know that experienced, qualified and well-resourced educators are essential to maintaining quality early childhood programs.

Clarendon Children's Centre has an existing enterprise agreement, and an established commitment to improved learning outcomes for children, the National Quality System and the Early Years Learning Framework. We plan to make an application to the EYQF as soon as this is possible and look forward to the benefits that this will provide to our educators, children and families.

We are concerned that there are significant limitations to the EYQF as it currently exists. In particular, the fact that it is limited to just two years means that substantial fee increases will be required after that period to allow pay increases awarded under the Fund to be ongoing.

We note that the \$300 million allocated to the EYQF, though certainly a substantial investment, will not be sufficient to provide funding to educators in all long day care centres. We further note that educators working in Out of School Hours or Family Day Care settings will not be eligible to receive these pay increases. As a result, there is the potential for the application of the EYQF to create unintended inequities and rifts within the early childhood sector.

These concerns aside, we appreciate this first acknowledgement that Government funding is necessary to address the problem of low wages that continues to be such an issue for early childhood educators and for the sector as a whole. We hope, and anticipate, that the significant positive benefits that will be seen to result from this funding initiative will encourage the continuation of the EYQF beyond its initial two years.

Thank you for considering our submission as part of your inquiry. We trust that the Senate Committee will conclude that the establishment of the EYQF will provide a substantial benefit for educators, families and young children and, therefore, that the EYQF Special Account Bill 2103 should be supported.

Yours faithfully,

Linda Davison
(Co-ordinator – on behalf of the Management Committee)

Clarendon Children's Centre
410 Clarendon St; South Melbourne. 3205
PH: 61 3 9209 6265
Net: <http://www.clarendonchildrenscentre.com.au>