



Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc.
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18 February 2014

The Hon Sussan Ley MP
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Australian Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Ley,

AFGW would like to commend your action on officially requesting the Australian Skills Quality Authority to undertake a review of the quality of training for the early childhood sector. We welcome the news in your media release of 24 January that ASQA will start work in February on a review of “training for childcare and early childhood learning”.

AFGW is the national voice of graduate women working, since 1922, through initiatives in Education for the advancement and wellbeing of women and girls. We view Education as essential for Empowering Women; Reducing Poverty Improving Health; Understanding Human Rights; and, Maintaining Human Security and Building Peace.

Our chief focus is with university and tertiary for women, but we believe that achieving at this level is only possible with good foundational education that begins in the pre-school years. We believe that quality early childhood education and care programmes can assist children with transition to formal schooling, preparing them emotionally and socially for the school environment, and assisting with motor skills, language, cognitive development and concentration. This is a benefit for all pre-school children but especially so for those for children from disadvantaged backgrounds or with disabilities.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics report for 2012 shows that 89% of school beginners have participated in a pre-school program; 38% of these were in Long Day Care. With the National Quality Framework (NQF) beginning to be implemented we believe it is essential that these children should receive high quality educational experiences from well trained teachers. It is also important that this education must be culturally appropriate.

Recent research¹ shows that children completing just one year of pre-school education have an advantage of 10-20 points when tested in Year 3 for the National Assessment Plan for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Those who gain the most from their pre-school education had an educator with a diploma or degree in early childhood education. We hope that in finding the additional 15,000 workers that the Productivity Commission identified as needed to implement the NQF high level qualification will be a priority criterion.

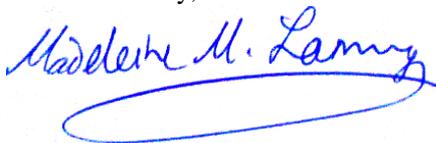
¹ D Warren and JP Haisken-DeNew. 2013 *The Causal Impact of Pre-school Participation and Teacher Qualifications on Year 3 NAPLAN Cognitive Tests*

AFGW also considers that these appropriately qualified educators need to be appropriately remunerated. Anecdotal material shows that in states where their qualifications are transferrable the best pre-school teachers are often lost to the school system where they are better paid are more respected and have better career development opportunities. Our pre-school children need the best teachers and any review of the sector needs to focus on their level of remuneration as well as the quality of their training.

AFGW welcomes the raising of the debate about the quality of early childhood training. We have also been reviewing the submissions made to the Productivity Commissions and look forward to their findings on the many issues that impact on high quality early childhood education and care.

Thank you again for beginning the process the ASQA to review training for early learning.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Madeleine M. Laming". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a blue oval.

Dr Madeleine M. Laming
President

cc. Kate Ellis
Shadow Minister for Pre-school Education.