

## Families pay the price of cuts to family day care

Funding cuts to the family day care sector continue to take a toll on Australian families with a number of quality family day care services announcing their closure.

Family Day Care Australia data indicates at least six quality family day care services have either closed their doors or have announced their imminent closure due to changes to operational funding for family day care services.

In its 32nd year of operation Wyong Child and Family Services announced that it would no longer be providing family day care on the Central Coast.

The service closure announcement comes just one month after Whitehorse Council Family Day Care in Victoria confirmed it would also close its doors.

The service - which had been rated and assessed as "Exceeding" the National Quality Standard - will come under the axe despite providing flexible early childhood education and care for more than 218 families in Melbourne.

This is just one of the many quality family day care services which have been forced to close in the wake

of \$157 million worth of cuts to the Community Support Programme (CSP) announced by the government last year.

Those unable to stay afloat also include Australia's first ever family day care service – The Brotherhood of St Laurence Family Day Care in Craigieburn – which was established more than 40 years ago with a particular focus on providing care and education to vulnerable families.

Figures have indicated that more than 80 per cent of family day care services across Australia will no longer be eligible for operational funding from July 2015, seriously affecting their ability to continue to deliver high quality early childhood education and care\*.

In a further blow to the sector, the final report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning which was released last week recommended the complete



abolition of the Community Support Programme (CSP) in its entirety to be replaced with a Viability Assistance Program which will only be prioritised for centre-based and mobile services.

In January Family Day Care Australia submitted a petition to the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Minister for Social Services, requesting a review of the eligibility criteria for the Community Support Programme (CSP) and for adequate consultation to occur with the family day care sector as part of the review.

The petition requested an extension of the transition time and for the government to consider exceptional circumstances funding, highlighting the far reaching affects the amendments to the CSP would have on quality service delivery, affordability for Australian families and accessibility for children across Australia.

\* Department of Education Community Support Programme (CSP) eligibility self-assessment tool (2014)

## Final Report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning

**The final report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning has been released however at the time of going to print the Government was yet to announce which recommendations they intend to agree to.**

The report will be a key influencer in future changes to child care legislation and the government's proposed "families package".

Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) has called on the government to increase its investment in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) beyond the Productivity Commission's recommendations and take into account the need for operational funding for family day care to deliver on its promise of more affordable child care for families.

The final report:

- ▶ Recommends that the current child care subsidy system be streamlined into a single child-based subsidy.
- ▶ Acknowledges that recent fees for family day care are higher than had been previously modelled under the draft report.
- ▶ Recognised that the role of the family day care coordination unit in the delivery of home-based ECEC is paramount in ensuring both child safety and developmental outcomes.