

Childcare centres blacklist accredited training organisations providing poor graduates ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Childcare centres have started unofficial blacklists of training providers they will not use because graduate quality is so poor.

There has been an explosion in the number of trainers offering Certificate IIIs and diplomas in childcare after the Government made qualifications mandatory.

Childcare centre operators have told the ABC many operate as "tick and flick" organisations where students effectively buy their qualification.

In many cases it has left students, who spent up to \$4,500 on courses, unsuitable for employment.

Operators said children also lost out, with young graduates being unable to properly interact with infants during critical formative years.

Students and operators provided the ABC with the names of at least six organisations with questionable training practices.

These include offering the year-long Certificate III course in eight weeks, admitting to monitoring student placements by phone and online courses without sufficient supervision for work placements.

However, all still remain accredited training organisations with the Government regulator Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

In 2014 the authority has cancelled the registration of one childcare course provider - the Community Training College in Queensland.

ASQA said it has an ongoing strategic industry review of training for the childcare and early learning sector.

It told the Productivity Commission inquiry into childcare it audited 46 trainers and found four out of five did not meet regulations.

After being given the chance to fix problems, one in five still did not meet the standard.

The childcare workers union, United Voice, has called for a national inquiry into childcare training.

'Industry cowboys provide quick, dirty service'

Simon Rosenberg runs four childcare centres through Northside Community Service in Canberra.

The chief executive said the business had struggled for years to obtain quality graduates but now had a partnership with a reputable provider.

He, and other providers, told the ABC they started to develop lists of providers they would no longer work with.

Mr Rosenberg said one course did not believe in textbooks or written assessments for students.

"There's a range of cowboys in the industry, who provide what's really a quick and dirty service," he said.

"There are some training providers who will do a Cert III in six weeks, some that will do online options only, have very limited supervision, very limited workplace support and very limited contact with the centres that the trainees are working in."

Mr Rosenberg said operators were supportive of moves to properly train childcare workers but there was not enough regulation of training standards.

"In the past there were cases where people didn't really understand the basics of how to interact with children, what quality care meant," he said.

"I believe it is a widespread problem. There's simply not enough regulation over training providers."

Assistant Education Minister Sussan Ley said generally training providers were good quality, but ASQA was there to regulate them.

"There are some Registered Training Organisations and some training organisations that take short cuts, and it's very important that those shortcuts are not taken at the expense of our children," she said.

Student says teachers forgot to teach half the content

Rhiannon Tones, 21, said she almost left the childcare industry after falling prey to a poorly-run course.

While studying a Diploma of Early Learning, students in her course were told teachers had forgotten to teach half the content and the year-long course was extended to two years.

"Over half the class dropped out because of their disappointment," Ms Tones said.

"It was the final straw after months of issues. I would ask a question and it would be two or three weeks to respond.

"Over 50 per cent of the classes were actually cancelled or arranged for another time.

"When I stepped in I realised I didn't have the knowledge most other diploma students have because I wasn't given the knowledge."

Ms Tones has now restarted her diploma with a better provider.

"It's really sad because when the girls come to do their placement [at my childcare centre] that's when they're awakened to what's actually going on and how much they've missed," she said.

"The simplest thing you have no idea of. Not only do you lack the skills but you also lack the confidence."

Melbourne childcare worker Erin Staid said her Certificate III course involved rewriting slabs of text from a text book onto worksheets.

"We'd be assigned some homework, which was 'here's your textbook, here's your notebook' and just asked to fill it in, not even asked to articulate it in our own words. Just 'write what's in the book'," she said.

"I just felt that ... I didn't know if my work was being looked at, our work certainly wasn't graded.

"When I went on to do my diploma at a well-known college I felt really behind the rest of my class."

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