

I live on the Central Coast of NSW and have worked in the early learning and adult education sectors for many years. Thank you for the opportunity to make the following points for this inquiry.

- There are chronic staff shortages, that will only be addressed when pay and working conditions are improved for those working in the sector.
- There is a shortage of early learning spaces on the Coast which impacts on parent's ability to return to work and their ability to choose the most appropriate service for their child.
- There is an oversupply in some areas (of 3-5 places) and complete desert in others – particularly in the birth to two age group who are the most vulnerable and the most expensive to care for.
- It is important for those in power to use language that reflects an understanding and respect for our profession when referring to this sector. "Cheaper Child Care" does not do that. It doesn't have the same political traction, but "Quality Early Education" is a more respectful reflection of the importance of what we do.
- There is a need for all local government to only approve services where the design promotes a healthy lifestyle e.g. with outdoor play areas where children have opportunity to interact with the natural environment where possible. It is also important for local government to address the issue raised previously about where early education services are located.
- The type of professional development that is required for teacher approval through NESA is often not useful to the teachers. There should be more autonomy in what teachers are allowed to call professional development.
- Services are experiencing extreme challenges when dealing with children who have complex needs. The linking of support to the NDIS as the structure for dealing with this is not working as the "need for a diagnosis" is bogged down in red tape. All healing comes through relationships (especially when working with young children) and although outside professional help is often needed, early childhood teachers are trained and perfectly placed to provide the professional support these children need. The pressure of the workplace, however, does not afford them that opportunity.
- Private schools are not allowed to make a profit from education (I know this is a contentious statement), and early education should be no different.
- Out of pocket childcare fees are a significant cost that parents incur in order to work, they should be tax deductible.
- 30 years ago, TAFE would have to interview and cull student applications for Early Childhood Diploma positions. Only one in 3 made the cut. Now those classes can't be filled. This says it all about the state of the profession.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to make submissions to this inquiry.