

As a parent living in a Child care dessert it has been a real challenge to find adequate support for our kids. We live in Armidale NSW and my wife and I both have full time jobs. Over the past 2 years we have been between centres, have casual nannies and at times have had to take days off to look after our kids. We see the great benefit and positive impact that the centres have on our kids, their development flourishes. We consider ourselves lucky that we have access to early learning at all, as we know plenty of people that don't.

We believe that there should be some key reform focuses:

1. Flip the focus to the child, rather than prioritising the childcare needs of the workforce. This would recognise early childhood education (ECE) as the foundational level of Australia's education system. This will ensure kids of the future have an equal start in life.
2. A child-centric universal entitlement so every child has an offer to access early learning. Instead of a child's access being determined based on their parent/carers activity or location, all children should have an entitlement to attend at least three days ECEC in line with the Better Start Guarantee, with more days available for children experiencing vulnerability, or for families who need it to support their workforce participation. This includes improving access and availability to ECEC in regional and remote areas.
3. Policy and funding should reinforce that ECE must be high quality to shift child outcomes and that a professional, capable workforce is crucial to delivering quality, with reformed /new financing instruments that adequately covers the cost of quality, inclusion, and that ensures pay and conditions for educators in ELC. Until we address the pay inequity, we will never grow the workforce to allow every child to have access.

We have a unique opportunity as a country to get this right and set up future generations for success, that success shouldn't be based on their postcode or parents' income. I truly believe this can be one of the greatest reforms this country has seen in recent times. Lets get it right!

Thank you

Jonathon Peatfield