



Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care

Byron Bay Preschool Submission

Thursday, 4 May 2023

Byron Bay Preschool operates two preschool centres in Northern Rivers, NSW. We pride ourselves on providing exceptional high quality early childhood education and care for our region's children and families.

Key Issue: Lack of quality in Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in our region because of staff turnover and shortages.

Workforce shortages of both educators, teachers and leaders in the early childhood education and care sector have a significant impact on quality of provision across our region. This has a serious impact on children's development and outcomes.

Key Points:

- It is critical Australia prioritises high quality early childhood education and care if we are to ensure positive outcomes for children. Children who have quality early childhood opportunities are more likely to gain employment and have strong relationships as adults. Positive early childhood opportunities also reduce mental health issues, hospital visits and crime rates of children across their lifespan (Caspi et al., 2016).
- Educated, experienced and skilled educators, teachers and leaders are required to build and provide these high-quality environments for children.
- Low pay and recognition for educators and teachers has directly resulted in staff shortages, high turnover and reduced quality.
- Early childhood teachers study degrees of the same length and complexity and primary and secondary school teachers and should receive equal pay and conditions. They are responsible for children in a critical stage of development and are required to do complex individualised planning and assessment. They are also responsible for leading teams of educators.
- The Childrens Services Award hourly rates for educators with a diploma qualification are extremely low. These educators have high workloads and expectations of documentation. Valuing and compensating these roles appropriately would ensure diploma staff can afford to stay in the sector.



- Experienced qualified teachers move to roles in primary schools where they can be better compensated for their work. Bright enthusiastic students that have a desire to work with young children study degrees for primary and secondary teaching instead of early childhood, as the recognition and pay they receive is significantly higher. These issues directly relate to a lack of qualified experienced teachers needed to support children during the most critical stage in their development.
- Highly experienced qualified early childhood leaders are required to build high quality early childhood centres and to mentor the next generation of early childhood teachers. The lack of well trained, specialised, and experienced centre directors has a major impact on quality of all early childhood centres. Post graduate qualifications in both early childhood and leadership should be given extra recognition and remuneration to encourage early childhood teachers to develop into leadership roles. The very low rate given for a director allowance does not compensate early childhood directors for the increased workload, responsibility, stress, and additional skills needed to manage an early childhood facility.

In Summary:

We enter this submission to advocate for a significant increase in pay and conditions for educators, teachers and leaders in early childhood education and care preschools, and long day care centres across Australia. We ask for immediate reform to address the staffing shortages and high turnover which results in reduced quality of provision. We point out that current and past generations of children have been severely impacted by these issues.

References:

Caspi A, Houts RM, Belsky DW, Harrington H, Hogan S, Ramrakha S, et al. (2016): Childhood forecasting of a small segment of the population with large economic burden. *Nat Hum Behav* 1: 0005