

Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care

Ross Circuit Preschool Inc
Lavington NSW 2641

18th May 2023

Overview

Ross Circuit preschool is a parent run, community based not for profit preschool, in a diverse and vulnerable suburb of Albury NSW. We cater for 145 children per week of both 3- and 4-year-old groups. We provide “universal access” (15 hours per week) to every child.

Dear Commissioners

Research papers and reports, consistently confirm that access to high quality early childhood education has long lasting positive effects on both children’s wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Research also points to the importance of high quality early education, “delivered by highly skilled and well supported educators, in order to significantly improve children’s development, and therefore achieve a return on investment” (Fox, S and Geddes, M. (2016).

It is essential, therefore, that the integrity of the National Quality Framework which introduced mandatory minimum qualifications for educators and early childhood teachers to build a highly skilled workforce is maintained to ensure high quality Early Childhood Education.

The “Lifting our Game” report back in 2017 (Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions 2017) made findings recommendations and provided strategies for sustaining quality and workforce (Reform theme 4). This report articulated that

“The quality of early childhood education is vital to its effectiveness, and the most important factor in delivering quality is a skilled and stable workforce”.

These minimum recommendations to support the recruitment, retention, sustainability and enhanced professionalisation of the workforce therefore improving service quality and children’s outcomes were presented. (pg 85)

- “ a. service leadership capability
- b. pre-service training quality and content
- c. ongoing professional development of the workforce
- d. responsiveness of pre-service training and ongoing professional development providers to the sector
- e. consistency and applicability of workforce registration and professional standards
- f. workforce attraction, stability and retention, including medium and long-term career paths
- g. the impact of remuneration and conditions on workforce stability and retention, and quality of practice
- h. workforce diversity, including Indigenous communities
- i. the status of the profession
- j. responses to localised issues, including in regional and remote areas”

How little has changed.

These recommendations from 2017 appear to be identical issues that are reported in these recent articles and reports. That is, work in the ECE sector has been undervalued, with dissatisfaction with pay cited as a main reason for leaving the sector (Fenech et al., 2022). Insufficient leave provisions, little work flexibility and poor job security, lack of professional and career development opportunities, high workload and poor administrative and leadership support

have also been cited as sources of staff dissatisfaction (CELA et al., 2021; Cumming et al., 2022; Fenech et al., 2022; Thorpe et al., 2018; United Voice, 2017). We support The National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (the Workforce Strategy) includes 21 nationally agreed actions to be delivered over the short (by the end of 2024), medium (by the end of 2027) or long term (by the end of 2031), grouped by six inter-related focus areas:

- Professional recognition
- Attraction and retention
- Leadership and capability
- Wellbeing
- Qualifications and career pathways
- Data and evidence

The fact that we are still having these conversations and commissions are calling for submissions, appears to be evidence that the fundamental disincentives to stay in the Early Childhood profession, are the same and still the major reason that our workforce, therefore our quality is becoming more and more difficult to maintain.

We do not need to broaden who may be considered an Early Childhood Teacher, or shorten preservice early childhood training to address workforce shortages. Rather we need to address these issues that make the shortfall such a problem and attract appropriate people.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission

[Lifting-Our-Game-report.pdf \(act.gov.au\)](#)

(Fox, S and Geddes, M. (2016). *Preschool – Two Years are Better Than One: Developing a Preschool Program for Australian 3 Year Olds – Evidence, Policy and Implementation*, Mitchell Institute Policy Paper No. 03/2016. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne)