

21st January, 2014

Dear Commissioner,

I am a Child Care Worker in my late fifties and have worked in Long Day Care for 19 years and Family Day Care in a remote rural area for 2 years prior to that.

During this time I have studied and achieved my Diploma of Community Services (Child Care) and Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. My commitment to my work requires that I continually maintain current training and knowledge relating to the care and education of children in their early years.

I work at a Community based Long Day Care Centre in South Australia with an ethos based on a not-for-profit, parent managed service.

Currently, I fulfil the roles of Assistant Director and Education Leader as well as working with 3 -5 year old children 2 – 3 days a week. Considering my experience in this industry, my ability to design and implement strategies and having the flexibility of adapting from early programming methods to SACS and now EYLF requirements along with the skills expected of my position, and comparing these with corresponding practitioners in another industry, I am underpaid.

This job comes with the extraordinary responsibility of caring for families most precious component - their children. My job role also requires me to give advice and direction to less experienced Educators and students as well as write and review policies.

At present, with a generous 5% above award rate paid at my Centre, I receive \$25.36 per hour!

In this Centre, longevity of Staff employment is a noteworthy attribute, along with excellent management by an experienced Director and high quality curriculum implementation and reviews in place.

As just one member of the leadership team I have recognised the many hours of paid and in some instances unpaid time needed to adjust to the many requirements of the NQS. We are confident in our quality of care and compliance, however, a few issues feel questionable when considering any benefit to an already high quality performing service.

One such issue is the directive that our Centre must employ a degree trained Early Childhood Teacher for 30 hours per week from the beginning of 2014. Several difficulties have already been recognised as a result of this Centre's experience in this matter:-

- Advertising for new Staff members is extremely expensive (we are a not-for-profit business).
- The role of the Early Childhood Teacher is poorly defined.
- Degree trained teachers are not aspiring to work in Child Care Centres.
- Positions appear to be accepted in Child Care Centres as a 'stop gap' until a School based position is on offer.
- The previous point leads on to the loss of continuity and stability for children in care.
- Educators already employed at the service have to be displaced or made redundant in order to cater for the 30 hours per week required for the degree trained employee (it is not within the scope of a not-for-profit service budget to have additional or extra Staff hours).
- We are aware of several other Centres, as well as our own, who are experiencing difficulties with degree trained teachers accepting positions and then resigning after a very short term of employment.
- When teachers resign, services can be left with the need of the services of Educators who have displaced or made redundant at the earlier stage of Early Childhood Teacher employment.
- Early Childhood Teachers appear to approach the Child Care Centre positions with a sense of wanting to work with and educate young children and being able to contribute to Educator teams with knowledge and creativity. However, the reality of working within the child care industry is not included within their training, does not carry the status or respect of 'teaching' that they seek, does not have great resources to access, has limited hours of employment and non-contact time and is poorly paid.

As our Centre proceeds into 2014, under an Early Childhood Teacher waiver because our Early Childhood Teacher resigned in December after having only one school term with us, our existing Educator team is committed to providing the best care, nurturing and education of our children. We all continue in this industry because of our passion and willingness to make a difference in young children's lives.

I look forward to the response of the Commissioners Report.

Yours sincerely,

K. E. HUCKEL.