

As a Group Leader who has possessed University qualification since 1999 and has worked in Child Care since 1996 I write to voice my concern regarding the Coalition's approach to Early Childhood Education, Families and Educators.

The National Quality Standards and curriculum of the Early Years Learning Framework that were introduced in 2012 have legislated proposed improvements to child/ staff ratios and qualification of staff which will benefit children and families. The NQF provides a much needed measure of high quality that can be applied across varying environments of Early Childhood Care across Australia. Our current Government has been unclear whether these quality conditions will remain legislation. The Coalition's Early Years Policy seems to argue for less education in staff and greater freedom of operation.

Though I have written often to Assistant Minister Sussan Ley I have received no clarification on these issues. I have received correspondence regarding the Federal Government's decision to revoke the Early Years Quality Fund. I represent a Centre who did not push Union involvement, has had an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement since the early 2000's and worked co-operatively with full support of our Parent Committee to construct our current EBA. Our Centre Educators were greatly demoralised to have our application dishonoured when it was in process at the time of the election.

There is no fiscal incentive to remain teaching in Child Care with only three levels of pay for Assistants and Group Leaders, the highest Group Leader rate being around \$26 dollars an hour. Educators cannot afford to have their own children, pay HECS debts, have mortgages or Health Care yet we enable Australia's economy by allowing other Australians to work.

Governments of the last fifteen years have abated Educators by suggesting that Early Childhood staff may seek better wages by gaining higher education. Now that staff have spent considerable time and money achieving a better informed, higher quality care for families Educators are now back at square one trying to convince our Federal Government that we are Tertiary and University qualified professional and should be remunerated accordingly.

Given what we know about early intervention for issues of mental health, physical development and rates of crime and delinquency later in life it is time our Federal Government redefined Early Childhood Care and fund it as part of Australia's Education system.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely

Cate Hansen