

Flinders University Childcare Centre

The educators at Flinders University Childcare Centre are passionate about Educating children in the early years. We are a unique service that is lucky to have experienced and qualified educators who are passionate about providing quality care for young children. Many educators have stayed in the sector because of this passion, they generally enjoy their work, and because they find it rewarding to optimise children's learning and development, we are professionals. Community based services operate as not for profit. The fees that families pay for the care of their children are used by the service to pay all educators, all general operation costs, all required maintenance and upkeep, required educator training and educators' entitlements. The annual budgets written and presented by community based services are finely tuned to meet these requirements. This in turn can affect the accessibility of affordable care, and increase the **out of pocket cost of childcare for families**. Community services that are run by parent management committees, have realised for too long that their Educators in their services, have subsidised their wages, for affordability for the families. So in return these Community based services have offered Educators above Award Wages and payments towards professional training development. To retrain and support their Educators, for continuity of care for children. As a result this impacts the cost of care and as Educators see this and the dilemma for working families and disadvantaged families in our communities. As this has retained and supported to keep our educators in the Sector, as the Community Services support the Educators by paying for Educators training and entitlements, it is not the case in all children's services settings due to the implications of **out of pocket costs of childcare to families**.

Many educators leave the profession because they cannot afford to stay, to move forward in their personal lives they need to move on to a higher paying position within society, sadly this could mean working at McDonalds for \$1.22 per hour more than the position of a children's service employee level 1.1.

[http://myjobs.chisholm.edu.au/uploads/attachments/Guidelines for minimum wages 2012 %282%29.pdf](http://myjobs.chisholm.edu.au/uploads/attachments/Guidelines%20for%20minimum%20wages%202012%20-%2029.pdf)

As a community the recognition for the multiple skills and professionalism that early childhood educators implement on a daily basis is lacking. Educators study to receive their qualifications, they continue to study, communicate and learn through ongoing training, sector updates, creative planning and programming. Early childhood education grows with changes to frameworks, increasing paperwork, implementation of blogs and developmental projects. Children's services employees are professional and should be recognised as such. Many of the educators at Flinders University Childcare Centre feel that the take home pay does not reflect professionalism. **There is a need to ensure that public expenditure on child care and early childhood learning is both efficient and effective in addressing the needs of the families and children**, in turn there is a need to ensure that the public recognises the importance of professional wages for early childhood educators, who also have families and utilize early childhood services for their children so that they can continue to work. It is a concern for educators that if professional wages are not implemented within the near future, early childhood education will not be seen as an attractive profession. Not all educators are supported by services that support above wages, pay for educators training and hence why the broader sector, has 180 Early Childhood Educators leave the sector and the Sector is in Crisis. The solution, is to top up Federal funding to the Sector, so a portion is given to families to assist in the

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cost of care and a portion towards Professional Wages for Educators. So no longer will Educators have to subsidise their wages, for affordability and accessibility for families and families don't have increased fees and have the security and knowledge that the Educators at their service, will be retrained and their child/children have continuity of care, which they deserve.

An educator expressed their view “early childhood education isn’t highly valued within this country, it appears the only people who value the importance of early childhood education are the people who work as professional educators in the early years.”

Developmentally children learn so many life skills between birth and 6 years of age, the years that families have the opportunity to be part of an early childhood setting. **Educators within these settings are addressing children’s learning and developmental needs, including the transition to schooling.** Many aspects of our planning and implementation of developmental programs take up so much of our time. As educators we find that this is important to record and document each child’s learning within the early childhood setting. **The benefits and impacts of regulatory change in childcare over the past decade including the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) in States and Territories, with specific consideration given to compliance costs, taking into account the government’s planned work States and Territories to streamline the NQF.** As professional educators we have watched and implemented these changes, each change brings the requirement for more paperwork, professionalism, training and acknowledgement of the rights of the child within a care setting. Streamlining early childhood education is a positive way forward for families, families want their children to enjoy their early childhood setting and to learn from their time in attendance.

Educators acknowledge and follow the UN Rights of the Child,
<https://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp>

we understand the importance of education. We understand that early childhood education creates a pathway to continued learning in a school environment, by the age of six years children have a solid foundation for reaching their full potential.

<http://www.children.gov.au/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/oeyc/library/0-6years.aspx>

Early childhood education is the most important time of a child’s education. Isn’t it time that the professional educators who care for Australia’s future are acknowledged, supported and receive professional wages to reflect the important role they play in society?