

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in relation to the current issue paper regarding the employment of teachers in early child hood centres. I currently work in a childcare centre in Victoria where I provide a kindergarten program for 4-5 year old children. I operate my program in the same way a standalone kindergarten teacher would however some children in my program attend for more than the basic 10 hours per week. I am currently in receipt of the commonwealth scholarship program to encourage kindergarten teachers to work in Childcare centres. I have had many discussions with other on the same program and we are all faced with similar issues which include:

- Reduced planning time
- Reduced holidays
- Reduced pay
- Lack of respect from our colleagues
- We are often faced with resentment by our employers due to our wages and holidays which differ from qualified child care workers particularly as they are often in the business to make money.

I have personally had many stressful meetings with the management at my current centre in relation to my rights however I still have not received the same rights as my fellow kindergarten teachers who work in standalone centres. I was actually trained in SA where kindergarten teachers are employed by the education department and have the same working rights as school teachers. I was quite shocked to find myself in the situation I am now where I have to fight for my basic rights and in many cases have not received them. I currently only receive half of the planning time I am entitled to and only 6 weeks holidays per year which I had to fight for. I have recently resigned from my current position but am still only going to receive the same entitlements in my new centre.

I am also faced with being treated differently by other kindergarten teachers in my hub group who look down on me because I work in a child care centre. I find it very challenging to be treated this way when I do the same job with worse working conditions especially when I not only hold an Early Childhood degree but I have also recently completed a Master of Education focussing on gifted education this year. I deliver a kindergarten program based on the Early years learning framework and am still required to write transition statements (which I had to do in my own time) and carry out all of the other duties and more (eg cleaning toilets) as other kindergarten teachers. In other words my role is the same and as important as other teachers. I believe there is a need for kindergarten teachers in child care centres as many of the children I teach would not have access to kindergarten if this service was not provided as both of their parents work full time. I just don't know how long I and my fellow workers can continue to work in childcare centres leading to a lack of good teachers in this field. In fact at this point I am assessing my work conditions and contemplating moving into teaching primary school once my scholarship is completed, this is a shame as I really love my role but am finding it difficult to deal with the additional stress associated with working in a child care centre.

I believe there needs to be a drastic change in the way kindergarten teachers are employed particularly those who are in childcare centres. We should have the same working conditions, holidays and planning time as our colleagues without the need to feel like we are begging every time we meet with our managers. I don't understand why all kindergarten teachers regardless of the workplace cannot be employed by the government in the same way school teachers are. And the working conditions should be decided on and made not negotiable so that teachers do not have to fight with management causing workplace conflict based on working conditions.

I am concerned that myself and other colleagues will either leave the childcare setting or leave teaching all together. This will be devastating to our sector as it will become increasingly difficult to find kindergarten teachers to do the job especially those with experience.

Thank you
Lisa Webster
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