

Marcia Spitzkowsky

The Director of Staffing Services
School Staffing Unit
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I am writing to request that the DET staffing unit address the appointment of a teacher to Kotara South Early Intervention Class for 2010, who is without the approved subject/teaching area codes or accreditation required to fill the position (Adv.no: 9/45828).

On 17 September 2009 I spoke to an employee of the DET staffing unit who confirmed that DET criteria for this position require approval of codes PSC - Preschool and or EIT- Early Intervention.

An important role of the Early Intervention Teacher (as per the Early Intervention Handbook) is to provide expertise, collaboration and support to teachers in preschools and day care settings to develop learning outcomes for students with disabilities in these programs. It stands to reason they should have **qualifications** along with at least some experience in early childhood settings.

From July 2008 the DET preschools come under the **DOCS Children's Services Regulation 2004**. These regulations are **law and require qualified Early Childhood Teachers** to be employed in those classrooms. It is discrimination for preschoolers with disabilities not to be included under this regulation to receive education from a qualified Early Childhood Teacher.

Early Childhood Teaching (ECT) is a specialization in the teaching profession. These teachers are trained to have a sound knowledge in child development and so are appropriately qualified to understand the needs of those children whose development is atypical.

In his Annual Report for 2007 to the Minister, Director General, Michael Coutts-Trotter committed to exercise leadership in Australian Education by shaping national policy and reform.

In 2009 the DET came on board with the commitment by The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to make early childhood education and care an area for national reform. **The National Early Childhood Development Strategy- Investing in the Early Years** has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life.

The new **National Quality Standard** will support high quality outcomes for children and be based on what the evidence shows are the key drivers of quality in early childhood education and care settings

Research demonstrates that one of the key drivers to produce high-quality outcomes in early childhood programs is the employment of well resourced and Qualified Early Childhood Teachers

The DET has recognized, by investing \$81.6 million under the **Early Years Strategy**, that teachers of kindergarten students require further training in child development. **The Australian Early Development Index** under the **Best Start Program** will assist teachers to understand some of what Early Childhood trained teachers already know and do within their profession.

If the purpose of the “**The Best Possible Start**” document is to leverage specialists’ skills, knowledge and pedagogical leadership for the delivery of quality early childhood education then this can only be achieved through its delivery by tertiary **Qualified Early Childhood Teachers** in the years prior to schooling.

How is it then that the position at Kotara South could be advertised without these criteria in place and to subsequently appoint someone who is not suitably qualified for the position?

As an unsuccessful applicant for this position I would be able to accept this, **were the appointed applicant suitably qualified.**

My protest is not that I, personally, did not win the position but that the DET is not enacting its commitment under the **COAG National Early Childhood Reform Strategy**. I will continue to work in Early Intervention within the community sector, as I have done for many years, however, I would like to do this with the knowledge that the DET is committed and actively working towards the same quality outcomes as all other stakeholders within the profession.

The DET has published, in their report of the **Consultation On The Future Of NSW Public Education & Training**, recognition that “...to achieve quality, early childhood teachers must work in **prior to school facilities.**”

For the DET to come into line with its own priority directions under the national agenda to implement quality standards in early childhood education they need to ensure that;

1. Staffing units implement the criteria for advertised early childhood positions with accreditation to meet the codes.
2. The position at Kotara South Early Intervention Class be appealed and filled using the correct minimum criteria.
3. Principals in schools hosting early childhood classes are aware of the regulations for early childhood settings and apply them to their Early Intervention classes.

4. Interview panels include an early childhood professional to offer their expertise to decisions for appointment to these positions.
5. Interview panels include a parent representative of a child within the Early Intervention Class.
6. The interview process involves measuring a candidate's ability to fill the position on the quality and breadth of the knowledge demonstrated in their answers rather than on them being able to cite one specific circumstance in which they have demonstrated the criteria.
7. Staffing amendments aimed at giving principals more opportunity to select the most appropriate teachers for their schools should not include relaxing acknowledged standards within the field of early childhood education.

I look forward to your response in writing as to what the DET staffing services will do to address these seven crucial areas to meet minimum quality standards in Early Childhood Education recognized and upheld by all other service providers in the field.

Yours Sincerely,

Marcia Spitzkowsky

Dip Tch (Early Childhood Education), B Ed (Special Education)

Cc: **The Hon. Verity Firth MP**

(Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs)

The Hon Kate Ellis MP

(Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth NSW)

The Hon Julia Gillard

(Commonwealth Minister for Education and Workplace Relations)

Disability Community Consultative Committee

(NSW DET Disability Programs)