

**Submission to the Productivity Commission
Education and Training Workforce
Early Childhood Development**

I have been an Early Childhood Teacher since 1988. Prior to 1988 I worked as a teachers aide in a Qld Department of Education preschool from 1982 – 1984. In the past 22 years I have worked for:

- 5 years in Aboriginal-Specific Preschools and Childcare Centres,
- 3 years with the Commonwealth Government funded Inclusion Support Program for children with additional needs,
- 3 ½ years as a DADHC funded Itinerant Support Teacher in Early Childhood Services to support children with disabilities,
- 1 Year with NSW DET as an Early Intervention Teacher for preschool children with disabilities
- 1 year as a relief Children's Services Advisor with DoCS,
- 1 Year in NSW DET as an ESL Teacher,

The rest of my career has been spent working as a casual teacher in both early childhood and school settings.

I have been the Authorised Supervisor of three preschools and Temporary Authorised Supervisor of 2 childcare services over 6 years.

In 1993 I upgraded my Diploma in Teaching Early Childhood to a Bachelor of Special Education, Early Childhood.

In July this year I left teaching to take up a position as a Parenting Coordinator with Brighter Futures under the auspices of The Benevolent Society. **These comments are drawn from my personal knowledge and experience and do not reflect those of my current employers.**

I feel my experience in this field of education permits me to make valid comment in relation to your study and while it is well overdue I welcome this opportunity. I can only speak for NSW as this is the only state in which I have worked as a teacher.

Scope of the ECD sector

1 Which ECD services for children with additional needs should the Commission include in this study?

The commission has made a fatal error in Figure 1, *Schematic representation of the ECD sector* by describing childcare services as separate from preschools. The early childhood years are a time when human learning is at its greatest. The proper care of children from 0-3 in these services results in learning that equips children to build all the skills necessary for their later learning in the preschool and formal school years. Brain development continues in these early years and cannot be underestimated in how this effects the learning of individuals.

Childcare centers provide learning programs for all students enrolled and thereby are educational centers for learning. To separate them only facilitates one of the problems you are trying to address. That is, the lack of professional status and parity of remuneration attributed to teachers and staff in this educational sector.

Within Figure 1, there is also an omission of Special Education services such as those in which I have worked for many years. The Department of Aged Care, Disability and Home Care provides for funding within NSW to address this need in preschools and Early Childhood Services. The NSW Department of Education provides 46 Early Intervention Classes, 100 preschools, Integration Support Funding to Children to non-government, not-for-profit incorporated services, Reading Recovery Programs for children 5-8 years, and Language Classes for children 3-8 years through their Special Education Directorate

Supply of ECD workers

2. Do providers of ECD services have difficulties finding staff? If so, are these problems more pronounced in some ECD occupations or in some areas of Australia? Why is this the case?

I recently spoke to a Director of a Child Care Centre in Penrith, NSW. She has an Advanced Diploma (TAFE) and has advertised for an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) for the past 6 months and received one application which was in Chinese. No other applications have been received. This may speak for the sector within this region or, it maybe indicative of the sector as a whole.

I would imagine that the difference in working conditions and status of teachers in preschool to those in child care centres would signify a similar difference in staffing these centres. In the Newcastle and Lower Hunter I can testify to very few positions being available in preschools over the past 10 years as opposed to significantly more for child care operators wanting to recruit. More favourable conditions around holidays and status in preschools would most probably account for this.

The strategy of the government to attract new graduates to the field by reducing HECS debts and training fees does not address the loss of experienced workers. A word of warning: If in our efforts to increase enrolments at Universities and TAFE courses, we lower the entrance scores to these courses, we actually lower the professional status and lower academic literacy levels of graduates from the course.

Research in the school sector in Australia and internationally is unequivocal about the importance and impact of teacher quality on student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ferguson, 1991; Hattie, 2003; Ingvarson, 1998; 2002; Ramsey, 2000; Rowe, 2004). It indicates that teacher effectiveness outweighs student background characteristics in explaining variation in student achievement.

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¹ Early Childhood Education, Pathways to quality and equity for all children. Alison Elliott

3. How much of the shortage is caused by low wages or wage differentials?

Certainly, many trained teachers have opted for work within the Department of Education and Training for better wages and conditions. Since 2010 Early Childhood services are now able to new Teachers under the Modern Award and this will have a profound effect on the number of graduates taking up positions in this sector. I have left the field of education myself. Although I love working in Early Childhood services. at the beginning of 2010 I was not permanently employed. While undertaking the search for permanent employment I found that all new positions I was eligible for were being paid under the Modern Award (MA). Under the previous state award I could earn \$65,701 pa as a preschool teacher rather than \$54,850 pa. This meant to do the same job as I had been doing for the past 20 years I needed to take a pay cut of \$10,000 pa. As a mainstream classroom teacher I was and could still be paid \$84,759 pa. If I were working in a special education classroom I would attract another \$2,185 pa. If I were a teacher in a DET preschool I would also attract the Teacher in Charge allowance of \$3,855 pa.

4. Are there other factors (such as working hours or conditions) that are important in attracting staff to the sector?

The story is even more disparate for Directors in Early Childhood Centers in comparison to Principals in DET schools. A Principal's wage is determined by the number of students in the school. A Primary Principal can expect \$97,543pa if the student population is below 25. If the school population is between 25 and 159 they can earn \$113,889. The staff within these schools will number approx. 1 teacher to every 25 students.

A Director of an early childhood centre with a student population of 39 students per day, which can amount to 70+ students per week (if they each come 2 days per week, can expect to earn up to \$63,605 pa. A centre with 60 places per day may have up to 150 students attending across the week and for this they will be paid a grand \$66,912 pa. The staff in these centers will number at least 1 to 10 students and at most 1 to 4 students creating a greater supervisory role to the Director than the Principal. The Director will have a full teaching load as well, where a principal in a more populated school will have a non-teaching role, or at least limited teaching duties.

The Director will in most cases have to undertake the duties of The Authorized Supervisor (under NSW Children's Services Regulations, 2004):
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/fullhtml/inforce/subordleg+260+2004+FIRST+0+N>

In this document you will find page after page on the responsibilities of this position. Be aware, however, that where the document reads " the licensee and the authorized supervisor" in reality these jobs will fall to the director as in the case of community based services, the licensee will be the committee and they

will not be on site most of the time. Likewise, in the private sector the licensee of a consortium or group of centers will not only be off-site but often they may not have the skills or understanding to fulfill the duties required and will pass this on to the director.

Directors Need to be Human Resource Officers, Policy Makers, Curriculum Developers, Staff Supervisors, Shift Supervisors, Educational Leaders, OH&S Safety Officers, Nutritional Advisors, Health Officers, First Aid Officers, Submission Writers (funding agreements and special education funds), Budget Managers, Stores Clerks and did I mention Teachers.

These are but some of the duties and responsibilities required and you probably won't find any Directors who don't work over and above their hours of work unpaid just to get the job done. You also won't hear too many complaining because they see so much value in their work and do it as a vocation.

It is no wonder there is so much burnout in the profession and it is hard to attract staff. If I knew what I know now and were training to be a teacher I would not make the decision to work in the early childhood sector, rather I would take the pathway into the school sector and enjoy my time in the classroom with the children where I could focus on the learning and relationships I develop within the classroom, knowing I am fairly remunerated for the important work I am doing.

5. What are the key factors influencing an individual's decision to work in the ECD sector?

Certainly not the pay.... I believe that it would be the same for others as it was for me. I had a devotion to being involved in the teaching and learning of children, particularly in the years prior to school because this is a period of wonder and excitement where the impositions of what adults think we should know only serve to limit our creativity and ability to problem solve.

I love their enthusiasm, honesty and their curiosity. They celebrate life every minute of every day, which makes spending time with them very stimulating and exciting. They are extremely resilient and this, we can learn from them. There is great potential in them all and I felt honoured to be able to be an instrument in helping them to develop that.

I enjoyed working to allow children to develop a sense of themselves within the community, how they belong to a broader group outside their family and how they contribute to that group. I loved helping them to appreciate, accept and embrace the diversity our communities represent, allowing them to develop their own strengths and assisting in their emotional well-being so they are able to cope with disappointment and frustration, helping them find ways to overcome their negative feelings, helping them to develop friendships and experience the joy of sharing their ideas, excitement and time with others, encouraging them to believe in themselves and their ability to take on challenges and to persist when things get hard.

I loved the work I did in Early Intervention to assist families to navigate the funding maze for their child, supporting them to set and reach their goals for their

child, helping them to be an advocate for the child's strengths and needs and assisting them to find the right school when the time came.

6. Do these vary for different ECD occupations?

For those in child protection it is to be the voice of the child when they cannot speak for themselves where their own welfare is concerned. Through the parenting programs I am currently involved with I can help parents to understand their children and how they express their needs. For the social workers in my organization it is their job to ensure that parents of these children are helped to get the support they need to be better parents. This could be housing, financial assistance, mental health services, freedom from domestic violence, overcoming substance abuse, accessing childcare and special education services. For without that help it is hard to focus on your child's needs. For health and allied health professionals I am sure it is the same common goal, to ensure children get the best possible start in life.

7. Why are ECD workers paid less than those working in related sectors?

The key answer to this lies in the change to funding the sector in 1996 when the Howard Government abandoned the operational subsidy paid to not-for-profit services and allowed families using private centers access to child-care benefit. This created a "level playing field" across the sector. I use the inverted commas because these are the words of Mr. Howard. However, it was far from a level-playing field. Profits made by private operators were now subsidized by the tax payer while "not-for-profit" centers channeled any monies over and above their operating costs back into their services to improve quality. (At the time of this shift in funding, I was working out of a community child care centre as an Inclusion Support Teacher and witnessed the redundancy of 2 child care workers who were employed over-and above the regulations for child to staff ratios. This was tragic to witness. The Committee had employed these women to allow more programming time for the primary care staff and now had to let them go as they could not afford to employ them without the operational subsidy. This clearly impacted on the quality of the service. This story was common across the country.)

Since that time there has been a rise in the number of private operators to the point where there are double those operating as community-based centers. Congruent to this, Early Childhood Teacher's and their unions have been chasing equal pay to that of teachers in the school sector with every case lobbied against by the private sector in order to maintain their profits. This is evidenced in the Keynote Address from **The Honorable Justice Monika Schmidt** at the Australian & New Zealand Education Law Association Annual Conference in Sydney 2010. I have attached this document with my submission as she also provides many more answers to the questions for this study. (see Attachment 5)

8. Are the wages and salaries for workers in different ECD occupations appropriate, given the skills and qualifications required?

Many positions with the social services sector are appropriately filled by Early Childhood Trained staff, given their training in child development and experience working with families, particularly those with vulnerabilities that compromise their ability to parent well. Within my position as a parent coordinator with Brighter Futures, I am paid under the SACS Award which attracts \$4,000 pa less than if I were to work as a Teacher on the top salary under the MA for teachers (i.e. approx \$50,000 pa). This is despite my qualifications and experience being crucial to me securing the position. Anything over and above this amount needs to be bargained for.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) has submitted a test case for parity of pay in this sector with Fair Work Australia. They have argued that the ability to bargain for anything over and above the minimum wage is compromised by the fact that the majority of this work is undertaken by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) who rely on funding from the government and private benefactors. The Commonwealth Government's submission to the case puts forward disturbing arguments to Fair Work Australia which has been fairly commented on by the ASU, I quote;

The Commonwealth has submitted that as a major funder of the industry, if Equal Pay were to be awarded the government would need to reduce other services to pay the higher wages. This is an outrageous attempt to hold the workers in the industry to ransom. It is not the responsibility of employees in the industry to subsidise services. It is the responsibility of Governments to make budget priorities to provide services to the most vulnerable members of our community.

9. If not, how might this best be addressed?

As I stated above, the ASU has a wage case tabled for review with Fair Work Australia and the Independent Education Union have tabled a similar case called "Teachers are Teachers".

There is only one way to address the inequity in the sector and that is to legislate for it and fund it. As you will find in the evidence presented in both these Fair Work Cases nearly all these workers are employed by NGO's who are funded by Government.

Regulatory burden

10. Does the regulatory burden have a significant impact on attracting or retaining staff in the ECD sector?

This is difficult to answer as I feel to get a true picture you would need to survey teachers and staff who have left the field and ask them if this is the reason and the only reason they left. I suspect that it is not the regulatory burden itself but the lack of time and support to implement it when so many other responsibilities lie with Teachers and Directors in the service.

11. Do you expect recently announced reforms to make a material difference to the regulatory burden facing ECD workers?

The combining of the regulations with the accreditation process is a step in the right direction for Directors in Long Day Care settings. Applying the accreditation system to preschools is a fair and necessary change but it will serve to increase the burden on Preschool Directors.

With regard to the adult to child ratios, the reduction of 1:4 for children under 2 has again been compromised in the face of what the evidence tells us is best practice for quality. This highlights the main reason behind all the issues faced by the sector. Governments are more concerned with returning budgets to surplus before the end of their term to ensure re-election. The thinking is always economics based not quality based. I refer you to the Inquiry into Early Intervention for Children with learning Difficulties conducted by The NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2. In their final report (2002) titled **Realising the Potential** (2003).

[http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/Committee.nsf/0/0736390ed48577aeca256da3000c2027/\\$FILE/Master%20copy%20Final%20Report%20.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/Committee.nsf/0/0736390ed48577aeca256da3000c2027/$FILE/Master%20copy%20Final%20Report%20.pdf)

The report set out 36 Recommendations, many of which address the issues now being tackled on a Federal level by this study.

Recommendation 12 Page 24

The Minister for Community Services should ensure the implementation of the new Children's Services Regulation, which provides for a staff:child ratio of 1:4 for children under two years of age.

While the Committee acknowledges that a shift in the ratio for children aged under 2 years from 1:5 to 1:4 does not reflect the recommended ratio in research, we consider 1:4 to be a significant improvement on the current arrangements that would also avoid the far greater cost implications of a lower ratio.²

So forgive me if I am skeptical about seeing reform in the sector by 2014 as these recommendations have largely been ignored in the state of NSW.

12. What more could be done to reduce the regulatory burden?

The regulatory burden is there for a good reason as we need to ensure a benchmark of quality and minimum standards in a field of education that is predominantly serviced by profit makers.

We need to look at other education systems to answer the question of what can be done to reduce the burden. In the school sector teachers are employed to teach. They teach to a set curriculum that is designed and overseen by experts in the field who are highly paid for their efforts. The regulatory frameworks that surround the work of teachers are looked after by others within the system. These others are considered experts in policy design that reflect government

² Realising Potential, Final Report of the Inquiry into Early Intervention for Children with Learning Difficulties, PARLIAMENTARY PAPER NUMBER 116

legislation in the field. The implementation of these policies and frameworks are overseen by non-teaching staff such as Principals, or Assistant Principals who are paid a minimum \$97,543 pa for their contribution.

However in the Early Childhood Education sector all this work falls to the director of the centre in collaboration with committees made up of well-meaning, but often inexperienced parents. As the director of a community based preschool I often laboured till 11.00pm at night, working with my committee to help them understand the needs of the service and their funding responsibilities. These committees stand for up to 2 years with new members elected as children leave to enter school.

Early Childhood Teachers/Directors have to teach to an individual program for each child in their care. The reforms do not change this. There is no document for them to develop a daily program from for all students. They have to know where each child is at in relation to their development on 7 domains. Individual profiles on each child are to be maintained. This is their curriculum, ever changing and individually tailored. Recording keeping and documentation is still a large part of their job which takes away from the time allowed to actually sit down and engage with children. This is the work that informs us on the strengths and needs of the children we teach and allows us to foster relationships with them. There is no-one on a daily basis to mentor the director in this process, they are alone and have to create their own support networks to evaluate and inform their work.

I cannot think of one service I have visited in 9 years as a consultant where the teaching staff has been given the release time required to complete the necessary documentation. They all take the work home. They will not admit it because it contravenes the regulations where confidentiality is concerned. This burden is unrealistic. It cannot be maintained for long and consequently you have good, experienced people leaving the field and high levels of burn-out in those who try to stay because they love the profession despite the demands.

In the case of the private sector I cannot say how this process is managed as I have not worked for such a service. However I am aware that for many, the Early Childhood expertise lies solely with the teaching staff of the centre and that they are at the mercy of the owners as to how the regulations are interpreted and met. I could tell you many stories, gleaned from my time as a consultant, of the frustrations staff have faced with owners who do not provide programming time for staff, utilize teaching staff to clean at the end of the day and are known not to replace staff when they are ill if the numbers of children fall below the ratio on that day. All this serves to maximize profit, and demoralize staff which leads to a compromise in quality.

Solutions

- **Stop expecting Directors to perform two jobs. Centres need Early Childhood trained Teachers to Direct and another Early Childhood Teacher to teach.**

- **The Victorian, Northern Territory and ACT Government models where the Early Childhood sector comes within the Department of Education's portfolio offer another solution.**
- **Create more Non For Profit Peak Services such as Kindergarten Union (KU) who manage 150 services across NSW, ACT, Victoria and Queensland. They are able to offer staff:**
 - Rewarding employment conditions within a well resourced, environmentally responsible workplace
 - A comprehensive orientation program
 - An outstanding professional development program which includes access to a wide variety of workshops, courses and network meetings
 - Opportunities for career enhancement within a large and highly respected organisation
 - Specialist support provided by our Area Manager and Special Education teams
 - A commitment to innovative and child-focused research on curriculum and development
 - Professional support provided by our Central Office team including Education, Human Resources, Finance, Marketing, Administration and IT
 - Recognition and incentives for outstanding early childhood TAFE and University students
 - Promotion opportunities and career diversity within a large organisation
 - Paid Maternity Leave for Directors, Teachers and Child Care Workers
 - Coaching and mentoring from experienced colleagues

They have a professional development program which offers

- Orientation sessions *
- Short courses
- Regional meetings *
- Directors/Area Manager Meetings
- Workshops *

<http://www.ku.com.au/employment/why-work-for-ku.aspx>

- **Get profit makers out of the sector;**

In the paper by Monika Schmidt she points to the discrepancy between the early childhood sector and the school sector wherein;

the early childhood sector came to be delivered though a small business model, rather than through a non-profit model, such as that legislatively required in NSW to be delivered by schools...

We need to ask if this is moral and acceptable. How are children under 5 allowed to have their education needs sold off to the profit-making sector when it is legislated against in the school sector?

Career pathways and professional development

13. Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded?

Perhaps the salary structures noted above answer this question sufficiently. In addition, if I may once again make a comparison to staff in schools, early childhood staff have to upgrade their qualifications in their own time. On completion, there is no guarantee they will be paid for their upgrade and they may even price themselves out of a job as budgets cannot cater to increased wages without a fee increase. Staff in schools have opportunities to be paid while attending university to increase or broaden their expertise, receive remuneration on doing so and can even hope for promotion.

14. How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced?

See comments under “Professional Status of the EDC workforce.” Sydney Day Nurseries, KU Children’s Services, Universities and TAFEs, and Early Childhood Australia are the peak organizations which currently provide career pathways beyond Directing a Childcare Centre or Preschool.

15. Are there barriers to ECD staff accessing training and development programs? If so, how could such barriers be overcome?

Peak bodies such as Community Child Care Cooperative, Kindergarten Union, Early Childhood Australia, Early Intervention Australia provide excellent training to keep staff up to date on changes to legislation, best practice and evidence based research. The cost can be prohibitive for centers to meet and often results in staff having to share attendance across the years or to pay for it themselves. Release time for staff is a financial issue to operators. Added to this burden, is the limited availability of casual staff. It is for this reason, that most in-servicing to the sector is conducted out of hours. Staff will not attract overtime and some will be lucky to get time-in-lieu. The Independent Education Union(IEU) provide excellent in-service programs which affordable and sometimes free training.

This could be overcome by providing centers with a training budget that allows access to professional development for every staff member each year and is tied to Funding Agreements so it cannot be spent on any thing else.

Professional status of the ECD workforce

A perception that many ECD occupations have a low professional status is considered to be a key factor in limiting the attractiveness of working in the ECD sector (Watson 2006).

16. Do you consider professional status to be an issue for the ECD workforce?

In my own experience, YES. Just the other day when I told someone I was an Early Childhood Teacher I received the comment, "Oh cool so you get to play with finger paint and dig in the sand all day." To which I replied "No, those are some of the experiences I can provide for the as their teacher." Unfortunately, unless you have a child of your own in an EC Centre the general public has no idea of what the job entails.

17. What factors determine professional status in the sector?

Recognition that we exist would help. Early Childhood Teachers are largely ignored by NSW DET
Society is dominated and guided by financial principals. We demonstrate how much we value a thing by how much we believe it is worth. We reward teachers, school principals, bankers, engineers, doctors, politicians, builders, plumbers etc for the services they provide.
While ever we continue to pay Early Childhood and Social and Community Services Professionals a minimum wage we cannot expect the status of these professions to be raised.

18. How might a change in status be achieved?

Perhaps an advertising campaign like the ones that were developed by the nursing profession would help to raise the profile of teachers and social workers in this sector.

What society also needs to understand is the importance of how learning and development in these years affects the social currency of our population, which in turn affects the future of, not only our economy but also our nation.

Our profile would be raised if we had more of a presence in the school sector. Then we are more easily perceived as providing an educational service. With community hubs such as Schools as Community Centers (SaCC) running in 47 schools across NSW some headway has been achieved. It is a shame these services have been capped and that once again we have a situation for staff where they are required to re-apply for their job every 3 years.

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentsupport/programs/ecip/sacc2009-ar.pdf>

Plenty of recommendations have been suggested but unless something is done, the status of Early Childhood Teachers and other workers will not improve.

Recommendation 1

The Government should establish a new portfolio and department responsible for child development in New South Wales. A suggested name for this new agency is the Department of Child Development. ²

This Department was never established despite the overwhelming evidence presented to the Committee on the need for one. The logic behind this recommendation was:

We believe such an agency will address many of the current concerns people share about the co-ordination and status of early childhood services in this State.

In fact the DET has followed none of the recommendations made in **Realising the Potential** (2003).

The NSW DET runs 100 preschools, yet in their 2009 annual report they do not recognise the employment of Early Childhood trained teachers, if there are any they are counted as primary teachers. Neither do they count the enrolment of these children in their numbers as can be seen in the Annual Report 2009 (web link provided).

https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/detresources/NSW_government_school_system_at_glance_XxBwNsoaEs.xls

Recommendation 19 Page 44

The Department of Education and Training should investigate ways to increase the proportion of teachers with early childhood training assigned to Kindergarten to Year 2 classes, through both pre-service and in-service training

The Council also believes that expertise in early childhood learning is of critical importance to teachers of children in Kindergarten to Year 2 and proposes that professional development programs be provided in this area, in order to maximise the benefits of the reduced class sizes in the early years.

Recognising that early childhood education is a sound public investment, the Public Education Council recommends that, in the context of future budgetary options, the NSW Government consider establishing multi-purpose centres for early learning and child development in new public schools and those undergoing major refurbishment. Such centres would build community networks, foreground the leadership role of public schools within their local communities, and familiarise children and families with their local public school and the benefits of public education. ¹

² Realising Potential, Final Report of the Inquiry into Early Intervention for Children with Learning Difficulties, PARLIAMENTARY PAPER NUMBER 116

NSW DET also run 50 early Intervention classes for children under school age with a disability. These are considered part of the Special Education Directorate, so there is no guarantee that an early childhood teacher will be employed in these classrooms. Perhaps it is considered unnecessary.

NSW DET ignores the EYLF³

The opportunities for continuity of provision for children from birth to age eight

The *Foundation Statements* (Board of Studies, 2005) provide continuity of provision for children from kindergarten (approximately age 5 years and the first year of school in NSW) through to age eight years and beyond. There are no links in the document to learning in early childhood services prior to school.

The EYLF does not feature under the publications and research pages of the NSW Institute of Teachers.

The NSW DET makes no reference to EYLF in any information provided to parents for preschool and or early intervention services. See Links;

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/preschool/provisionaccess.php>

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/types/preschools.php>

[https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175\\$\\$/media/downloads/intranet/lists/directoratesaz/earlychildhood/earlychildunit/welcomeeiclass.pdf](https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/media/downloads/intranet/lists/directoratesaz/earlychildhood/earlychildunit/welcomeeiclass.pdf)

In fact the only reference on the whole website I could find was in November 2009. "In Principal" a weekly memo to principals, noted the endorsement of the Document by COAG with links to DEEWR. In November 2010, in the same memo Principals were alerted to a workshop on ELYF for preschool and early childhood staff. This training was at a cost and teachers' participation was at the discretion of the Principal. There was a \$100 fee.

The NSW DET has done very little to address any recommendations made by government enquiries since 2002, or by the NSW public Education Council in relation to early childhood education.

7.6 that the Department conduct research into the uses of data to improve student outcomes at school and classroom levels and disseminate examples of good practice and support materials as indicated.⁴

19. What would be the effects of such a change?

³ Analysis of Curriculum/ Learning Frameworks for the Early Years (Birth to 8) Appendices - April 2008

⁴ Report of the NSW Public Education Council 2002

Clearly the status of ECD workers would be raised and along with that the pedagogies would be more harmonious. Curriculums would focus more on children's potential and style for learning and their ability to building relationships, rather than filling them with content.

Productivity of the ECD workforce

Integration of ECD services

20. What are the implications for the ECD workforce, in terms of skill-mix requirements and work practices, from integrating or co-locating ECD services? Multi-disciplines from social and health services would work together with the education sector to provide for all the needs of families of young children. See the link to SaCC on page 11.

21. Is there scope for the development of a generalized ECD workforce or a pool of specialized integrated services managers?

A generalized workforce suggests there would be an overall understanding of the field rather than specialized knowledge. Service Managers need to be proficient in delivering services that allocate support in appropriate fields or disciplines in a timely manner.. The also need expertise to co-ordinate support so as to have a co-ordinated approach to the family's and child's need.

ECD workforce for children with additional needs

22. In the context of increasing integration of ECD services, does the involvement of multiple unions and professional associations affect the capacity for innovation and flexibility in the ECD workforce?

I don't see that the involvement of multiple unions (by that I read different awards) should have any greater effect on services providing multidisciplinary teams than are posed by the Modern Awards system where individuals are able to negotiate for better pay and conditions. In fact award awards under the old state system would be easier for employers as they had one agreement for each profession rather than many for each individual.

Roles in a multidisciplinary team are clearly defined and each profession brings their own expertise to the field to ensure all aspects of the child's development are addressed. Within the Department of Health this is managed well across disciplines so there is no reason it should not be so for Early Childhood Development services.

There is an advantage in having multiple professional associations involved in service delivery. The best practice and research knowledge is readily available to be shared across disciplines and it is then up to the innovation and creativity of

the workforce to enact this. It actually fosters reflective practice and enhances the skills and knowledge of the workforce. There is also a smooth and co-ordinated approach to the development of goals for the family and child, rather than a splintering of these goals across many services.

23. *Do ECD workers have the skills to provide effective services to all the children who they regularly work with, including those with disabilities and other special needs and from CALD or low SES backgrounds?*

I cannot answer this on an individual basis but I can tell the commission that ECD professionals are trained to do just that. Course content is intensive in all these areas at both TAFE and University levels. The enrolment is made up of these diverse groups and has been for many years. Support services have been available so skills to deliver appropriate support and programs should be developed within the staff of centers who utilize this support.

However, the nature of the job for workers within centers does not allow the time to develop and source appropriate resources to best match student needs, therefore support has been provided through the Inclusion Support Funding offered by the Federal Govt., SCAN funding from NSW Govt. Inclusion Support Provisions from DET and Early Intervention Funding from the State through ADHC Department (which goes to fund services such as Early Links, Firstchance and Prelude in the Hunter). These services are then able to employ staff with expertise in meeting the needs of these populations of children. The remuneration for these teachers and staff does not recognize their expertise.

The NSW DET the workforce provides Itinerant support teachers to address the needs of children with specific learning challenges (e.g. vision, hearing etc.)

24. *What additional skills or support might they require in order to do so?*

It is not always about the skills, in many cases the skills are there and there are plenty of exceptional early childhood teachers who successfully include these children into their services in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Support could come in the form of more release time to develop and research the appropriate program and to conduct programming meetings with involvement from case managers, special education teachers and the family.

As recommended in **Realising the Potential**, therapists skill are needed in schools and early childhood centers. The therapy needs of children can then be addressed and translated to the learning environment, ensuring the generalization of skills.

Recommendation 31 Page 70

NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Community Services and Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services should move urgently to develop a joint

framework for the provision of therapy services in schools and early childhood services across the State, including the use of consultative and team based models. This joint framework should consider:

- The most effective interagency arrangements to engage therapists to work in schools and early childhood services²

25. How appropriate are the remuneration and conditions for ECD workers for children with additional needs?

In this area there are three services offering Early Intervention Support to children with additional needs outside the NSW DET. Only one, Early Links Inclusion Support Service offers permanent positions to their teachers. The other 2 have long time employees (some with over ten years of service) who are contracted to work for 12 months with renewed contracts each year. These services usually have waiting lists and are not known to need to canvas for enrolments yet the security for workers is not guaranteed.

This situation is brought about by the way in which the services are funded. Every year they are funded on the number of enrolments rather than a finite number of places that can be offered. Governments could enhance the working conditions i.e. reduce the paper work and onerous tasks of submissions by delivering on a recurrent funding model. These kids are not going away, there will always be a need for these services. The data exists to demonstrate the minimum number of places required in an area for the past decade. Successful enrolment is determined by the physical resources and these are in place. This number of places should be guaranteed.

26 .Are there particular workforce issues for early childhood intervention workers?

ECD workers in this area come in many forms. Through state and federal funding, centres are able to employ an extra worker in the centre to assist with including these children successfully into the program. This funding is only sufficient to employ an untrained or perhaps Cert111 (TAFE) trained person. What then happens is that the teacher who has the expertise continues to work in their role while the additional worker tags or assists the funded child. Support is offered from Early Intervention services to ensure an Individual program is in place and this is monitored over the year. Early Intervention services also assist with the transition to school process. The guidelines for this are set by DET and recommend that meetings take place to share information on the support needs for the child. These meetings are coordinated by early intervention staff and in

² Realising Potential, Final Report of the Inquiry into Early Intervention for Children with Learning Difficulties, PARLIAMENTARY PAPER NUMBER 116

my experience they always happen in the school setting and within school time. The only visit to the early childhood setting by school staff that I have witnessed (in 9 years) has been by school counselors. The kindergarten teacher is most often not available for these meetings as schools cannot guarantee who that teacher will be. Therefore the information sharing process relies on the school staff passing this onto the kindergarten teacher the following year. The person who will teach this child does not benefit from the transition process. This is contrary to recommendations made from the 2002 inquiry;

Recommendation 17 *Page 40*

The Department of Education and Training should convene a cross agency working party to develop guidelines concerning the sharing of information between schools and early childhood settings. As part of its brief, the working party would also develop:

- Strategies to encourage private childcare and pre-school providers to participate in information sharing
- Ways to fund release time so that teachers are able to meet with early childhood teachers in prior to school settings.⁵²

Very recently, I am to understand the DET in NSW now considers Transition to School as beginning in Term 1 of Kindergarten. This is hearsay but often hearsay is not the official line however it is what is put into practice. If this is so, we will begin to see a lack of commitment from schools to be involved in any discussions or meetings with staff and parents who know the child best. To me this would be a frightening state of affairs.

Within the DET Early Intervention classrooms there other issues for workers. Children from 2-6 with a recognized disability or learning problem are eligible for enrolment in these classes.

- These classrooms are seen as special education classes. This allows them to be exempt from the Children's Services regulations which are governed by the Child Care and Protection Act.
- Buildings are old and in disrepair.
- Adult size toilets and lack of disabled facilities is evident
- Nappy changing areas are piecemeal and inappropriate
- Health and hygiene issues are at the discretion of the teacher
- Equipment is old and outmoded with a budget of \$300 per annum for resources
- Fencing in some is inadequate to ensure safety and prevent absconding
- Ramps are unavailable in some.
- Maintenance is minimal or non existent

² Realising Potential, Final Report of the Inquiry into Early Intervention for Children with Learning Difficulties, PARLIAMENTARY PAPER NUMBER 116

- Supervision for teachers programs is unavailable by those who have expertise in the field of early childhood qualification
- Consequently recruitment to these classrooms can often mean interviews are conducted without any expertise on the panel and criteria is established which is inappropriate to the qualifications required to effectively teach in this field.
- Therapy services and expertise is non-existent within the department
- Outdoor play environments lack the Australian Standards for soft fall around equipment of specified heights and in fact teachers are very often ignorant of these standards, not having to ever adhere to the Children's Services regulations.

This study should consider visiting some of these classrooms to see the antiquated way they are running. It would also be of use to find out just how many, if any benefited from work under the BER.

27. Is the expertise of such workers sufficiently recognized and valued?

In 2010 the NSW Government General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 held an enquiry into Provision Of Education To Students With A Disability Or Special Needs. I submitted to this enquiry and I attach documents and my statement in relation to these documents (Attachments 1-4), where this question is concerned. These relate to recruitment practice within NSW DET, particularly in setting the criteria for positions for special education classrooms.

I have found that my special education qualifications has been an advantage to me in securing positions in the non-government sector of education. However, when applying for positions with NSW DET, I have been not found this to be true and in fact I have found that my early childhood qualification is not recognized as teaching experience. I have been told in feedback on 9 interviews that I interviewed extremely well but that someone with more "classroom" experience had been successful.

I thank the Productivity Commission for this opportunity to have my say on these issues. It is hopeful that someone finally wants to listen to the problems faced in our profession for decades. Let's hope there is a change and that it does not require another 8 years and more enquiries before it happens

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