

I have worked in the Early Childhood profession since 1988. I am currently working for TAFE NSW as a Head Teacher of Early Childhood Education and Care. I believe education is a right for all children.

I am a member and organiser with the Social Justice in Early Childhood group <http://www.sjiec.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/386682908051273/>

What vision do we have for all Australian children?

In 2009, the COAG vision was *by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation*

http://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/national_ECD_strategy.pdf

Has the vision changed?

What values are we instilling in all Australian children? Are we putting our children first? And if so, where do we see this in government policy? It is essential that government policy is child focused.

- The early years of life are the best opportunity to lay the foundations for a child's future. **By getting it right in early childhood, we plant the seeds for tomorrow's engaged and active student, productive and skilled worker, and confident and loving parent** (COAG 2009b). Investments of time and money in the early years have been shown to be far more cost-effective than investments made at any other time (Heckman & Masterov 2004; Keatsdale Pty Ltd 2003).
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2012/ctgc-rs15.pdf>

The best returns come from investing early;

- At the same time, good quality early education and care is associated with a number of measurable benefits to children's development. **Further, well resourced, high quality programs can ameliorate identified risks to children's development.** However, there is also another dimension. Families cite preschool, childcare and playgroups as playing a significant role in family life (Tucci et al., 2005, 16). Hence these services have the potential to also become a source of advice and support to parents in their parenting role.
- http://www.csu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/227313/What_about_the_kids_full.pdf

Investing in early childhood education makes good economic sense. Me-now market fundamentalism does not make sense and is not sustainable into the future. As someone who has worked in education for the last twenty six years, I am yet to see how government policies based in competition improve education quality and equity for children and their families.

No parent has ever said to me that they are ok with less than quality education for their child. Parents want the best for their child.

Research indicates that quality early education and care is an important consideration for parents.

[http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/ACECQA_Submission_the_immediate_future_of_the_chi
ldcare_sector_in_Australia.pdf](http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/ACECQA_Submission_the_immediate_future_of_the_childcare_sector_in_Australia.pdf)

- “We will all benefit if we give them the best possible start in life and collectively invest in this essential public good.”

http://www.qualitymatters.org.au/sally_whitaker_article

- “In the case of Australia, expanding early childhood education service may put pressure on the fiscal balance, at least in the short run. However, it contributes to a narrowing income inequality by enabling a more equal formation of human capital at early age and by facilitating full-time labour participation by women.”

[http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/business/jessica-irvine/why-investing-in-
childcare-makes-good-budget-sense/story-fnj45kvd-1226842411806](http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/business/jessica-irvine/why-investing-in-childcare-makes-good-budget-sense/story-fnj45kvd-1226842411806)

- Nobel Prize Winning University of Chicago Economist James Heckman has long argued that Governments must "invest in early childhood education now or pay later". He has found that every dollar invested in a pre-school program generates a 17 per cent return to society.

[http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-14/alberici-early-childhood-
education/4008962](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-14/alberici-early-childhood-education/4008962)

Dropping the qualification for educators to Certificate 3 is detrimental to early childhood education.

- “We must have well qualified people to lead innovation and change for the future. By diluting the skill set for people working in the sector we devalue the importance of early childhood education. Research is clear educational leadership makes that difference in delivering effective early childhood programs and pedagogy”.

Associate Professor Manjula Waniganayake, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University.

- Watering down ratios and qualifications to below nationally recommended standards will compromise quality education and care experience for children and add to entrenched barriers to attracting and retaining committed, qualified staff.

Dr Marianne Fenech, Senior Lecturer, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University.

- Advocacy group The Parenthood said a national survey it was conducting had found that of more than 600 parents polled so far, 95 per cent did not want qualification levels reduced.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/parents-want-childcare-workers-to-be-highly-qualified-says-group-the-parenthood-20140825-10867o.html>

- The NQF qualification requirements, by establishing this new benchmark for quality, are increasing professionalisation across the education and care services workforce.

http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/ACECQA_Submission_the_immediate_future_of_the_childcare_sector_in_Australia.pdf

The NQF is a good for Australian children. <http://www.cccnsw.org.au/pdf/cccnsw-nqf-submission.pdf>.

Almost 62 per cent of assessed children's education and care services are Meeting or Exceeding the National Quality Standard (NQS), according to the latest National Quality Framework (NQF) report. http://acecqa.gov.au/children-s-services-continue-to-meet-and-exceed-higher-standards_1

The below crisis has to be addressed by Australian governments. The funding system must change. The argument that the only way to address this is by increasing fees for families is absolving governments and communities of taking responsibility for its children. We are all responsible for all children. Absolving responsibility for children results in <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

Australian governments must fund early childhood education services.

Louise Tarrant, National Secretary of United Voice says "Statements by the Assistant Minister for Education have done nothing to allay educators' concern that the Government does not understand the gravity of the crisis facing childcare.

- "Our submission to the Productivity Commission inquiry confirms educators' experience and available research: quality is critical to parents and to their participation in the workforce," says Louise Tarrant. The educators' submission reveals that over the next five years:
 - 180,000 additional trained staff - almost double the existing workforce – will be needed due to increasing demand and high turnover (currently 180 leave the sector every week);
 - Average daily fees will top \$100 and up to \$120 in more expensive markets.

http://www.unitedvoicensw.org.au/productivity_commission_inquiry

Lets keep the vision and create the best education for all children

Kathy Gelding