

To whom it may concern,

I am an early year's educator currently doing a Bachelor of Education (early childhood studies) I have worked in the industry for 14yrs. I originally started my career in the U.K. in a Montessori day nursery.

I gained my qualification in the UK and it was recognized as a Diploma level early childhood educator. I started working in Australia in 2003. I found there was a vast difference in quality of care and education with respect to centres not adhering to ratios in Perth.

In 2014 WA is still not adhering to National Quality standards in delaying the introduction of 100% ratios. This affects the relationships that staff have with children as educators because understaffing leads to stressful educators and children. Ratios are very important and if the eastern states can do it so should WA.

I don't think I will want to work as a teacher in Long Day Care when I graduate (and this is a common sentiment) because I won't get paid as well as in a school or have the same hours and conditions. The best educators under the current system do not aim to work in long day-care. This needs to change. Long day care is the poor cousin to schools.

In the UK families respected the profession and did not take it for granted. Why? Maybe because they did not feel entitled to it as Australians do because they pay for it in full. However if to not be appreciated or respected by the communities the price I have to pay for equality for all people to have access to early childhood care and education so be it. The community needs to respect the work we do. This needs to change. Proper remuneration for teachers and educators shows the community that we are not just babysitters". (So that they can go out and do "real" work.)

Money/funding/resources should go to businesses schools and day-care. The quality of education and care would improve. I suppose I should mention Finland as a model or New Zealand. This would be better in terms of equality rather than paid maternity leave that rewards wealthy parents with more money than say a poorer childcare worker who is now raising the wealthy parent's children.

As an example, why should a mother/father who works HR in coal mining, which is harmful to the environment be paid more maternity leave than a mother/father who is an educator, whose vocation improves all of society and teaches about caring for the environment be paid a higher rate of maternity pay. It sets up the child unequally before even birth. Once again a reflection of values that I don't think is Australian. It has been stated by the IMF bank that inequality leads to lower productivity and GDP.

Early childhood care and education is part of the continuum of education not separate from it therefore a parent should not be judged on whether they work or not. All children have the right to access quality education.

Children who attend day-care more than 10hrs a day 5 days a week do not benefit from the system. This should be illegal and it is neglectful. It is a form of institutionalization. There is always a but though, people who are struggling psychologically at fulfilling their role as a parent and are at risk to themselves or their children should be supported in various ways including LDC but professionals still need to be aware that it is a form of institutionalization and that there are other ways.

Yours Sincerely

Tracey Foster