

## IPART Review into Early Childhood Education and Care in NSW

### Issues

- Focus is on excellence rather than equity.
- Increased administrative and compliance costs due to policy have not improved outcomes.
- Regulatory authority data on quality is extremely outdated.
- The transient nature of the early childhood workforce means parent information is faulty.
- Negative attitudes towards the profession due to:
  - Inflexible hours
  - Administrative load increase on carers
  - Impact of registration and accreditation visits on staff morale
  - Increased curriculum content and outcomes record keeping in younger years
  - Expectations of doing all of the above plus continuous professional development whilst providing the same service to the customer
  - Remuneration issues
- If you continue to increase the level of qualifications of the staff due to policy requirements then you will increase the salaries and wages of the establishment, and that is fair and reasonable. Very young children's care should focus on other criteria (rather than high qualification for curriculum content and outcomes) that involves specific capabilities, such as circle of security, safety, language development etc, that would require less hours of training.

The argument that you require the most qualified teachers with very young children cuts out a large group of people that are perfectly capable of taking care of children. Finland has proven this with their education system, where students do not start until they are 7, there are no external pressures to assess, and they are given the time and scope to build a strong foundation *and* they can prove that they have a higher literacy rate.

Our workforce in NSW has changed since the COVID induced re-structuring of businesses, and families have different needs for care. This requires more research to assure us that we are not basing a review on old requirements.

The long day care model was established by the commonwealth government, which dictated the hours and usage of service that is no longer as relevant to all families in regional or rural areas.

Children with diverse needs do not always fit into the long day care model of service as well.

NSW government may be happy that community-based services cost shifted to the Commonwealth for childcare, to get funding but the model does not always suit their families, and has increased the costs for childcare overall.

Some brief suggestions:

#### **Disadvantaged families that are underserved:**

- Support families as first teachers by giving a supported playgroup framework, play spaces, access to resources, and parenting advice (train indigenous facilitators or culturally appropriate facilitators for specific communities)
- Add early childhood program to local rural schools five mornings a week for ages 3.5 to 5 (allows for continuity, provision of foundational skills and capabilities, and provides security) – The model of sending children for two days to a publicly funded service and then families use three days at a childcare service is not ideal, and is driven by policy.