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Wage Justice for Early childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024

Gowrie SA commends the Government on addressing the low wages of the female-dominated ECEC sector. Educators in this sector have for too long been underpaid for the invaluable, important and intensive role they play in society. Gowrie SA supports the Wage Justice (Special Account) Bill in principle.

Gowrie SA agrees with the Objects to support remuneration increases for workers in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, a sector that provides an essential service, to:

- (a) address current workforce shortages by helping to attract and retain early childhood education and care workers; and
- (b) contribute to the ongoing professionalisation of the early childhood education and care sector; and
- (c) ensure that early childhood education and care remains accessible and affordable to families; and
- (d) encourage good faith bargaining and the making of enterprise agreements in the ECEC sector

We would like consideration given to the fee cap which will be placed on services. While we agree with the intent, we are concerned that the unintended consequence of this will be limitations to the ongoing professionalisation of the sector. Our fees, and the fees of services implementing increased quality measures, are necessarily higher to cover such costs. As an example, we have created reduced contact roles which support educators to become leaders. This provides career pathways which will be put at risk if fees do not cover the expense of these roles. As an organisation, we also set funds aside for social justice initiatives for families which may also be put at risk due to fee setting limits. It is clear the grant funding received is only for staff wage increases above those already being paid, and not for any other expense. We urge the government to give due consideration to the impact of this. We suggest a fee cap range may be a more appropriate way to be responsive to individual service models while supporting family affordability.

Regards,

Lynne Rutherford
CEO, Gowrie SA