

4 June, 2013

EARLY YEARS QUALITY FUND SPECIAL ACCOUNT BILL 2013

I work as a director in a centre which is part of a group of 8 child care centres situated on the Gold Coast. Since the announcement of the Early Years Quality Special Fund the majority of our educators have voiced concern to me, as to where they, and their co-workers, stand in benefiting from the \$300 million. In attempting to keep our staff informed we have only been able to advise them that their skills, their qualifications, their loyalty and hard work within the industry account for nothing in the proposed application process. We have bachelor qualified staff who have worked within the industry raising themselves from assistant to director and kindergarten teacher, or alternatively staff who have gained Cert III, Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualifications through effort and dedication to their profession. The reality, as far as this funding is concerned, is that this is not considered an accurate measurement of whether they deserve a pay increase.

As employees, we have no influence on the process as to whether we receive a pay rate increase. We are relying on the management of our centres to lodge our application with urgency to potentially receive some funding. An educator working their first day, only just beginning a career in child care may get paid an increase through their service whilst another educator who has worked hard to qualify and work their way up to Group Leader or Director will miss out as their service was unsuccessful for unknown reasons. How is this reasonable or legal?

In fact, the measure of whether the educators, those persons who work hard at providing safe and educational environments for our children, who are working tirelessly to implement the National Quality Framework, will receive a pay increase based on irrelevant criteria. Such measures as whether the company they work for has presence on and "*meets specific reporting requirements*" for the mychild.gov.au website and whether the company they work for "*explains to parents the level of financial assistance provided by the Australian Government through Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate*". Imagine if a pay increase was announced for public servants, teachers or nurses which only paid a maximum of 1 in 3 workers a higher rate.

In 2010 a "Modern Award" was brought in to effect in order to consolidate pay rates of the states and territories within the industry. Its aim was to standardise all pay rates and, over time, all ratios within the child care industry. The government is now demanding this national system be abolished or over-ridden, effective immediately, to increase the pay scale on the basis of "first-in-first-served", 30% of the educators within the industry. Not all, but a select few. A select few who don't have to apply as individuals, based on their work and qualifications, but a select few whose employers have web presence or a few posters up around their centre talking about CCB and CCR for families.

Based on the "defined set of eligibility criteria" and the non-qualitative selection process which has been announced I believe the process to be **discriminatory, inequitable and unfair**. We have had unions approach staff at our centres since the funding announcement stating they can assure the staff, if they join the United Voice, that they are guaranteed funding. The eligibility criteria specifically states funding is not conditional upon union membership, our staff are therefore being bullied and illegally misguided by union officials. The representation of the United Voice on a government, hand chosen board does nothing to dispel the belief held by the entire industry that the selection process will be not equitable or fair.

The wording of the EYQF Accounts Bill fails to point out the magnitude of the discrepancy between those that will be approved and those that won't. It does not review the effect on the industry as a whole. The centres that miss out on funding will have to meet funding arrangements for staff in those centres which do receive the grant in order to keep staff. This cost can only be recouped by increased fees to parents. This contravenes Article 18(3) of the CRC that all parents will benefit from the funds, where in fact only an estimated 30% will benefit and 70% will be severely disadvantaged, and in truth, will end up paying higher fees.

The government is rewarding some educators not on the quality of their provision of care but simply because all of the boxes were ticked including the Enterprise Agreement. Educators with higher qualification and skills will be discriminated against.

Where is the evidence that determines that paying an additional \$3 - \$6 per hour ensures that educators will provide superior education and care? Educators who will not receive any funding may in many instances provide a higher level of education and care. How does an unfair, and discriminatory funding arrangement of \$3+ per educator for 30% of the industry create a more robust and appealing profession as compared to \$1 for everyone??

The Early Years are so important in a child's development and I request that this Bill be rejected until the federal government agrees to distribute the Early Years Quality Fund Grant monies equally amongst **all educators** who care for, educate and support our nation's children - not just a select minority.

Is it equitable, fair or non-discriminatory for random government employees to decide from a distance, based on words in an application process, which educators justly **deserve** a pay rate increase and as such which families and children deserve educators paid more highly than others?

Regards

Director
Kool Kids Early Learning Centres