

**Submission to the House of Representatives regarding the \$300million wage increase for selected Early Childhood professionals**

Family Day Care Educators Association NSW Inc is a not-for-profit organisation run by a committee of volunteers all of whom are current Family Day Care educators. Our aim is to support Family Day Care (FDC) Educators in NSW in their endeavours to provide quality Education and Care in their own homes to families across NSW. Many of these families are recognised as being vulnerable and in many cases, especially in rural and remote areas, FDC is the only affordable Early Childhood Education and Care service accessible to them due to a wide variety of social, financial and other barriers. Also, in some areas of NSW FDC is the only Early Childhood Education and Care service available to families.

The cost for FDC educators in providing this care and education is constantly increasing due to changes in legislation, law, standards and regulations. This is having a two-fold effect - many families and our state's children are missing out on the positive outcomes of Early Education and secondly many FDC educators advise that it will no longer be financially viable for them to continue to operate their Early Childhood Education and Care service.

It is our understanding that a \$300million wage increase was announced for limited numbers of Early Childhood professionals working within long day care and preschool settings. It is believed that this will help to give Early Childhood professionals the recognition they deserve for the role they play in shaping young lives. Early Childhood professionals do indeed deserve better remuneration and recognition for the importance of their role however we feel that there is great inequity in choosing only Educators from long day care and preschool to benefit from these reforms. Under current regulations, all professionals working with children, including FDC educators, must meet the same requirements. Family Day Care is assessed and rated under the same standards and framework as all Early Childhood services and has spent many years fighting to receive recognition that the service provided in FDC is equal to that of other services.

This reform has several layers of inequity surrounding its implementation. Firstly, not all Educators will be entitled to this funding; only those who apply and are successfully chosen will benefit from the reforms. Secondly, the funding is finite and not continuous creating a short term solution to what is a long term problem. Our question is - what will happen when the funding ends? Lastly, the funding is not available to all Early Childhood and Education service types, excluding those who provide a service as a small business. This serves to undo much of the hard work done in advocating for the quality of our service in the community and gives the perception that Family Day Care is not valued and/or recognised as a quality Education and Care service.

Following are some suggestions to address this inequity, to support all children and families not just in NSW but in Australia and to assist all services to continue to provide quality Education and Care:

- Recognise Family Day Care as a valuable service providing quality Education and Care that adheres to the same standards, regulations and laws as all other services.

- Provide a means for all Early Childhood professionals to earn an income that reflects their value and contribution to the long term positive outcomes that we all seek for children now and in future generations.
- Ensure affordability for families and viability for all service providers by providing sustained funding to Education and Care services.
- Increase operational funding to Early Childhood Education and Care services together with raising the amount of child care benefit paid to families. This will have the effect of reducing fees for families and ensuring access for those families who are currently unable to afford and access childcare.

Please consider these points when debating these reforms, and in moving forward seek to find a way to ensure that every single person in Australia who spends their life dedicated to providing quality Education and Care for Australia's future generations is valued, supported and appreciated for their wonderful work and dedication, both with public recognition and also with adequate remuneration.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Perdriau  
President  
7 June 2013