

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Reference Committee

Inquiry into the Education Of Students with Disabilities.

Response from Early Childhood Intervention Australia Tas. Chapter

Early Childhood Intervention Australia is the national peak organization representing those with an interest in Early Intervention for young children with disabilities and developmental delays. Membership includes families, community organizations and professionals from a variety of backgrounds – Health, Education and Childcare.

We would like to comment on

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The effectiveness and availability of early intervention programs

Most research shows that effective early childhood intervention happens in services that are family centred, multidimensional and community based. E.C.I.A. supports the inclusion of children with additional needs and disabilities into all community services.

- Within the state of Tasmania Early Childhood intervention programs are covered by Education, Health and Childcare services. At this stage there is no coordinated approach at a systems level with each service meeting families and children's needs from individual departmental priorities.
- This has led to parents at times being confused as to which services they can access.
- With funding constraints it has been difficult for all services to provide an equitable level of service to families living in isolated or remote areas.
- As Special Needs Subsidy Scheme funding has recently been capped it will be very difficult for families of children with high needs to access community child care services as these children require high levels of support while in community child care centres.

1.vii. Teacher training and professional development

- At this stage the teacher training programs within our state do not offer any specific training in the area of early childhood intervention.
- E.C.I.A. is one of the only organizations that provides and sponsors professional development and information sessions in the area of Early Childhood Intervention, within the state. During this year the 5th national E.C.I.A. conference will be held in Hobart, this is not likely to occur again. As Tasmania is an isolated area it is very difficult to obtain current and international professional development and information within our state. After many approaches to the state and federal government we were only able to obtain a minimal amount of funding to assist with this conference. Services can only be as good as the training they are able to offer their staff and the level of support that can be offered to families. This has suggested to us that these agencies do not have a commitment to professional development and support to families with a young child with a disability.

Marguerite Clark

President E.C.I.A Tas. Chapter