



The IEUA speaks on...

Authorised by Lynne Rolley, Federal Secretary Independent Education Union of Australia

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Independent Education Union of Australia believes that early childhood education and child care services play a crucial role in supplementing parental care, promoting children's social, cognitive and their personal development. This role is vital in enabling parents to participate in employment, education and training. Access to good quality care is a priority for families combining employment and family responsibilities.

The IEUA knows that good quality early child care and education sets the right foundation for children's further development.

Early childhood education and child care services are also important in terms of an individual child's needs for companionship, play opportunities, social and emotional and intellectual development, either through regular care or occasional care.

Extensive research has demonstrated the value of early childhood education. Effective schooling cannot be developed in isolation and early childhood education is important for subsequent success and schooling should build on the influential pre-school years.

Well-trained early childhood educators have the knowledge and skills to identify children who are at risk and to make provision for early intervention, thereby lessening the necessity for later remediation.

The IEUA strongly supports intervention in the pre-school years, when the need for developmental support becomes apparent. In this context, centres need more time, in the form of increased qualified staff, to work with individual children. Further, formal transition to school structures need to be established with time made available to the appropriate staff to meet and work together.

The IEUA notes the increasing emphasis on the welfare role of the early childhood teacher which has been expanded to encompass child behaviour management, advice to parents, and protective behaviour programs. To support teachers, links need to be supported and resourced between outside agencies and centres. Provision also needs to be made to allow for collaboration between early childhood teachers and centre staff; parents; community and government agencies; as well as opportunities for the support and structured interchange of information and strategies between centre Directors.

Early childhood teachers need to receive salaries and conditions commensurate with their responsibility for the physical, emotional and intellectual development of young children.

The IEUA calls for greater coordination to occur between relevant local, State and federal government departments in the planning of new services; and in the establishment of programs, priorities and the development of partnerships between early childhood providers to ensure there is continuity, consistency and equity of service provision.

Finally the IEUA calls on the Australian Government to undertake a wide ranging review of early childhood services to (i) review policies with a view to reconciling the demands of employment, caring for children, quality educational experiences and gender equality, (ii) review the cost of childcare provision and the allocation of these costs, including the funding of services and the question of costs and benefits.(iii) undertake a comprehensive Australian longitudinal study into the broad effects of early childhood education.