

ANONYMOUS 16819 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions

Recently my eldest daughter completed her final year of schooling. As a former early childhood teacher I reflected upon her success. She studied hard through her final years and always had a love of school and learning. She had good and supportive friendships. She never experienced bullying. She has always had a comfortable home and fresh food in her lunchbox and on the dinner table. She has had every educational opportunity including music lessons, access to cultural activities, hundreds of books, access to IT, access to local state schools with high socio-educational advantage indexes, supportive and loving parents and extended family. She enjoyed early childhood at home with her loving mother and caring grandparents. She accessed two days of kindergarten per week. She went on every school excursion offered and joined sports programs that interested her. Both her parents are well-educated. While her parents are both teachers with postgraduate qualifications, her mum only worked for about five years, rather opting to stay home, manage all home duties and make everyone's lives easier. She opted out of participating in "having it all" and persisting with the stressful juggle that is modern life. My daughter's grandparents assisted with this choice by providing 1/3 of the funds for the family to purchase their first home. We have travelled and lived overseas. She got almost straight A's throughout her schooling and achieved a 99.7 ATAR / IB 44. She was awarded a university scholarship at \$6k per year for four years. In short, while my daughter worked hard to achieve success, the inequities of Australian society came into acutely focus. My daughter's success was a natural and predictable outcome of her childhood experience. She had every advantage in relation to what we know about childhood outcomes. Most people in our situation don't grasp their own privilege and this is a key problem. Everyone wants to believe in meritocracy and egalitarianism but it's a fantasy. Australia is a class-based system based on economic, educational and social standing. It couldn't be more apparent when you compare early childhood services across the country. People can purchase a "rolls Royce" service and then move onto a "rolls Royce" primary school if you live in the right suburb or have the means to access private school. You can purchase advantage and this only entrenches disadvantage. We know what works and yet governments sit on their hands and continue to pretend everyone gets a 'fair go' and that we live in a 'meritocracy'. The concept of "good schools" and "bad schools", must be abolished through funding and staffing which brings real equity to all government provided services that children access in the early years. Feeling safe, having a sense of belonging and having basic needs met are fundamentally important. There are still too many children with unmet basic needs in Australia. It's incredibly difficult to learn and thrive when your most basic human rights are not met. We cannot hang our hats on the tiny percentage of success stories of people that overcome their disadvantage. They are certainly commendable but far from the norm. Fund services and and early intervention programs like they are an investment in this nation's future.