

## **ANONYMOUS 17192 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions**

We need to support all families from the beginning. I am currently teaching children where families have minimal supports and the children are struggling to meet milestones. Some of these children come from families who are experiencing or have experienced trauma. As an Early Childhood Teacher, my role is to support these families. For some, it is their first time in care and they struggle with hearing that their child is experiencing some difficulty. If support was provided, from birth to 5 for all families, there would be a reduction in these delays. We need some kind of program or targeted services so that no one is missed. Currently, I can suggest supports but if the parent is not willing to hear this or seek further help, then the child misses out. When my children were young, I attended Maternal Health Clinics and this is where development was monitored and any concerns raised. This doesn't appear to happen now. Would it be possible to have these attached to childcare centres and community kindergartens so parents can access at drop off and pick up? Maybe part of attending a centre is that you consent to your child having regular checks with the health nurse. We then need to find a way of providing these services to those children who don't attend any care prior to school - these children may possibly be at the greatest risk.

We also need to allow our teachers/educators to be more present with the children by simplifying the expectations around documentation. Building relationships and being present with children allows strong connections to form and children thrive in this environment. We need to pay our educators their worth to ensure we get people who are the best people for the role. There are too many educators out there who are struggling. We also need to raise the bar on who we employ in these crucial roles.

Building connections between agencies to provide for the whole child is important. We need to provide time and staff for this. In a community kindy, the staffing is very different to child care so it is difficult to build these connections during the work day. We do not have any rostered breaks due to the nature of the program. In long day care, I had 2 hours per day where I was able to contact other agencies, network, etc and build those connections.

Having a child with a disability, I believe it is important that children attend early childhood and school with a range of peers. However, this must be alongside supports that provide the best outcome for all. Putting a child into a program with no support means no one benefits, least of all the child with a disability. Last year, I had a child start in our program in the last term and funding had closed for the year which meant having a non verbal child with ASD in my class and no support for him. He needed 1-1 support for safety so we had to take the support from other children to provide it for him. Everyone was disadvantaged. I truly believe with the right supports in place, he would have made more gains and the other children would benefit from him being in our class. Instead, it was a disruptive term which placed considerable stress on all students and staff.

I strongly believe that for this strategy to work, we need skilled teachers who have the time and resources to develop relationships with children, their families and support agencies. Support agencies need to have a presence in child care and community kindergartens so they can build relationships with families and support them alongside the teachers. We need to develop ways of

supporting those children who do not attend care so they don't arrive at school with delays. Schools need to get ready for the children and take them from where they are at and the curriculum needs to be lightened for the early years and go back to basics. Learning through play is important. We need more parent education as more and more, schools are having to teach things that parent's should be.

Long day care model needs to change so that children have consistent staffing and key teachers. Children struggle to feel safe and secure when the rosters keep changing and the person they connect with is not there to start the day. More connection and care and thinking about what is best for children rather than profit. These are children's lives we are talking about, not KPI's.