

Comment by Dr Phyllis Jackson

Foundational to the development of an ECEC Strategy, Australia's federal government needs to have, as a cornerstone of its Strategy, an integrated federal, state and local government policy that—at every opportunity—promotes, develops and funds multi-disciplinary service team approaches. Such service team approaches are place-based and provide and/or connect health, ECEC, social and educational services to children and their families. They point the way to a service system that will potentially support all members of the community. The forming of collaborative relationships and working partnerships between ECEC services, schools, health and other community organisations, within a local area, potentially provides the opportunity for early childhood care and education to be recognised and valued by the wider community, and for the role of the educator in young children's learning and development to be respected; an expectation embedded in *The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*.

The majority of ECEC educators who participated in a doctoral research project that I completed in 2020¹ believed that valuing the quality of the child's experience in an ECEC service was overshadowed by a policy discourse that focuses on access, affordability, and flexibility of service provision for working parents. Given the marketisation of education and care in Australia, the opportunity to exercise an ethical choice, of employer, may prove to be increasingly problematic for many of these educators who value access to ECEC as a child's right rather than a marketplace that supports parents' workforce participation and business profitability. Addressing the complexity of educators' work—in particular staff working in ECEC/LDC services located in highly disadvantaged communities—as well as the professional/service isolation experienced by many ECEC services, is both desired and challenging.

¹ [Practices of professionalism in ECEC: Long day care educators at work.](#)