

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

Is anybody listening?

Maria Montessori stated, 'the most important period of life is not the age of University but the first period from birth to six years.'

Bill Gates – 'The first 5 years have so much to do with how the next 80 will turn out.'

I am an Early Childhood Educator, Long Day Care, who is passionate about my role in contributing to the positive shaping of children's abilities to become life-long learners in this ever-changing world. I am privileged to, work for a progressive not for profit ECE company, have amazingly dedicated colleagues, have wonderful families and intelligent children to share the exploration of the world of play and learning.

Prior to coming to Australia, 13 years ago, I was a teacher and manager in an ECE facility in New Zealand where all the teachers in this facility were registered ECE teachers, paid at a comparable level to registered teachers in other sectors of education.

Where I work now I was the only registered ECE teacher employed at the centre for the first 10 years of employment.

The notion that ECE, Long Day Care is simply to allow more mothers to return to work, is an outdated concept, as it diminishes the high level of care and education required to ensure Australia's most vulnerable have the best possible opportunities in their most experientially critical years of life.

The biggest concerns needing to be addressed is the disparity of the high cost of Australian Childcare and the lower overall quality on offer, in comparison to OECD countries. Australian ECE has become dominated by a business model that deems children, in their most formative years, to be commodities. Cost has become the focus but quality is equally as important.

To change the landscape of Australian Early Childhood Education:

1. Legislate to have Early Childhood Education moved from a miscellaneous union to an Educational Union as it is in OECD countries.

2. Acknowledge community based not for profit centres, through higher funding. I believe if a comparison was made, more community-based centres on a percentage basis would be rated exceeding in relation to Assessment and Rating standards, than for profit centres.
3. To encourage employment of higher qualified educators, fund centres that employ more diplomaed and degreed teachers, than are required by standards, at a higher rate as many OECD countries do to ensure higher standards are encouraged for the sake of children.
4. Eliminate Cert III as a viable entry qualification to ECE, no other OECD country considers this level of qualification suitable for ECE.
5. Encourage educators to be paid by qualification not by designated role. Titles such as assistant and group leader are demeaning and link to the justification of lowly pay rates.

Yours sincerely
Carol Ruskin