

Quality Early Learning requires quality funding

1. Professional Qualified Sector

- Educator Salaries need to reflect the importance of the sector. This would assist in a higher uptake for a career opportunity
- The Workforce shortage is driving up costs as Providers compete for the limited supply of available Educators
- Numerous studies have shown that access to high quality early learning supports better outcomes for children and families. This is achievable with a qualified supported workforce
- The qualification requirements supports quality early learning is delivered to children. Attempts to dilute or water down these hard fought for requirements will "dumb down" the profession and result in a less uptake of career uptake
- We should be putting energy into raising the value of the profession with professional wages and terms/conditions. Lowering the current requirements will further impact improved AEDC outcomes for children
- Quality should be valued over cost cutting or the impact of the current workforce crisis. There is no sector support (from the educators I speak to) for a dilution of the early education sector when we know the long term value and impact for children and families
- If we have a national NQF, why don't we have a national approach, it make no sense for different states and territories to have their own ability to make different decisions
- Burn out is increasingly common and heavily influenced by core Educators having to carry the main workload as there are so many vacant roles
- Review the funding increase as per Aged care - there is a beginning of migration of staff from Early Learning to Aged care based on salaries – further exacerbating the current challenges

2. Affordable, Accessible Early Learning

- Many services are dropping enrolment numbers to mirror the staffing shortage, this results in less places for families to access early learning places as well as financial viability for services providers to operate the services in a viable manner

Funding or resourcing children with Additional inclusion rights and Vulnerabilities

- The NSW Inclusion funding for children with disabilities amount is \$24.27 and Commonwealth funding amount is \$23 per hour. This does not cover the cost of employing staff per hour(**). This creates a funding gap. The annual subsidy for our 13 services where we have 66 children enrolled with additional needs across 9 Early Learning Centres and 3 Vacation care creates a huge funding gap. The cost to pass on to all families to support inclusion is \$284k this current financial year and set to increase to \$386k in 2023/24. This leads to less choice for families to enrol children from vulnerable backgrounds (prefer not to name the Council)
- There is an inequity of Preschool vs Long Day Care in terms of the hourly rate. In addition, there is an inequity in which children receive funding. An acceptable diagnosis for a child attending Preschool receives State funding but the same child has the Commonwealth subsidy declined (inequity in what is accepted for funding criteria)
- There is an increasing influx of children with additional inclusion needs transferring from private/corporate services to not for profit providers. This has a disproportionate impact on these services due to the funding gap for children enrolling in Early Learning Centres based on the "loss/gap" of funding income to provide inclusion
- The current funding model of being able to deliver profits undermines the funding supporting affordability for families.
- Affordability – children attend up to 3 days of free Preschool and also attend Long Day Care. There is an impact of children having to attend 2 services to have their needs met – experiencing 2 early learning settings, 2 groups of staff, 2 groups of children. This is particularly poor option for children who come from vulnerable backgrounds. The low cost of Preschool is appealing so children are going to 2 locations whereas in past more likely enrolled in 1 service

** Staffing costs - receive funding of \$23 per hour vs actual costs for an entry level Cert 111 qualified staff member

2022/23 Hourly Rate	2023/24 Hourly Rate	Funding hourly rate	Funding gap per hour
	w/loading and oncosts		
29.490000	38.45	23.00	-15.45