



2 July 2009

## Childcare - facts that matter

- In the past 20 years approved child care places have increased six-fold (from 114,000 to 700,000). A five-fold increase in approved services has also occurred, from approximately 2,500 20 years ago to 11,500 today.
- Children attend childcare settings in Australia on average between 18 and 23 hours per week per child.
- 72,620 primary contact staff (and 5,210 ancillary staff) educate and cared for these children.
- Each childcare professional is responsible for up to 5 children between birth and 3 years of age and 15 children from 3 to five years of age.
- Services must be licensed to state regulations that set minimum facility, health and safety, staffing, curriculum and programming standards in each state. The cost of childcare.
- To be considered "qualified" staff must undertake a Diploma in Children's Services. This takes approximately 2 years of full time study and covers child, family, and cultural development, programming theory and practice, safety, health and hygiene, behaviour management, and designing environments for learning through play.
- Currently up to 45% of the current workforce has no formal qualifications.
- Severe shortages of qualified staff because of low pay and poor conditions result in up to 45% turnover in some areas.
- By 2013 it is estimated that we will need a further 7000 staff in the sector.
- Child care workers on average earn between \$15 (unqualified) and \$19 (qualified) an hour in very physically, emotionally and logistically demanding work. They work long hours with little time if any to prepare for and evaluate their work with children and parents.
- There is a now a strong international evidence base for reform to improve the experiences of both children and staff working together in early childhood settings. The 'iron-triangle' of quality indicators are improved staff training, staff to child ratios and maximum group sizes for children at different stages of independence.
- Experts estimate a return of between \$2 and \$17 for every dollar governments spend wisely on their citizens' early childhood education and care.
- Australia spends less than .4 of 1 % of GDP on ECEC and ranks 23 on a recent OECD report card of ECEC provision.
- LHMU - The childcare union is calling in particular for COAG to deliver on its commitment to the following improved conditions for children and ECEC staff:
  - 1 staff member for every 3 babies (up to 2 years)
  - 1 staff member for every 5 toddlers (up to 3 years)
  - 1 staff member for every 8 preschoolers (up to school age)
  - A career path for all staff working with children from a minimum entry level Certificate 3 in children's services, through to Diploma and Degree qualified staff members
  - A minimum of 4 hours programming time per week for each group of children

