

Early childhood educators fight for pay to boost standards ^[1]

Author: Patty, Anna

Source: The Age

Format: Article

Publication Date: 7 Dec 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The Federal Government has been accused of under-investing in early childhood education at the same time Australian school children fall two years behind children in other comparable countries.

Early childhood educators chained themselves outside Treasurer Scott Morrison's Sydney office on Wednesday to protest against being paid as little as \$20.61 per hour which they say is half the average wage and not much more than the minimum of \$17.70.

The women, representing 80,000 long day care educators who teach 700,000 children are demanding an increase in their pay rates to bring them up to the level of similar professions. They argue they should be more highly valued for the role they play in helping children get the best start in life.

Research has shown the early years of education provide a critical foundation for the academic growth of children. Australian high school students are now up to two years behind their peers according to the latest OECD snapshot of 15-year-old students in developed countries.

United Voice says that Australia at a minimum should increase its investment in early childhood education and care to at least 1 per cent of GDP.

The union submission says Australia spent just 0.48 per cent of GDP on early childhood education in 2013-14, much less than the 0.8 per cent spent by comparable nations including the UK (1.1 per cent), New Zealand (1.1 per cent), Denmark (1.6 per cent) and Sweden (2 per cent).

In a 2017-2018 pre-budget submission United Voice, the union representing the educators, of which 97 per cent are women, says professional wages for educators are needed to improve the quality and status of the job.

"Our investment is currently less than middle-income and low-income countries such as Korea, Mexico and Romania," the submission says.

"High quality education in the early years is critical to child development: 90 per cent of brain architecture is formed by age three."

The union says the federal government needs to address the inequity in pay for gender-segregated occupations including early childhood education.

"Educators have taken the extreme step of chaining themselves outside Scott Morrison's office because they want the Treasurer to face facts," national secretary for United Voice, Jo-anne Schofield said.

"The wages system in Australia's early childhood system is well and truly broken and it is the Treasurer's responsibility to fix it.

"Educators hope the government takes heed and commits to properly funded early education - including professional wages - but educators are ready to escalate their campaign if necessary."

-reprinted from The Age

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[3]

Tags: childcare workforce ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/12/early-childhood-educators-fight-pay-boost-standards>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/12/early-childhood-educators-fight-pay-boost-standards> ^[2]

<https://www.theage.com.au/business/workplace/early-childhood-educators-fight-for-pay-to-boost-standards-20161206-gt5624.html> ^[3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> ^[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/childcare-workforce>