

Revealed: Childcare workers paid less than McDonald's workers

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EXCERPTS

Childcare workers responsible for caring for children in their most critical years of development are among the lowest-paid workers in Australia, The New Daily can reveal.

On Tuesday, roughly 6500 early childhood educators from more than 300 centres walked off the job to protest against low wages.

Workers with a certificate III are paid as little as \$21.29 per hour – almost half the national average wage for full-time adult workers.

That is less than what a McDonald's worker, an electrician and a retail worker earns for full-time work.

Rukmini Bose-Rahman, director at Monash Caulfield Child Care Centre, said some early childhood educators who had forked out tens of thousands of dollars for a teaching qualification are contemplating leaving the profession due to "disheartening" pay rates.

At TAFE NSW, a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and Care degree costs \$35,200 and takes four years of study to attain.

"I currently have at least two staff members out of a group of 22 who are contemplating leaving the sector," Ms Bose-Rahman said.

"This is happening rampantly in our sector."

[Video embedded, available to view online]

Early childhood educator Sarah Lagg, 43, has worked in the industry for more than 20 years and said "lots of women" are resigning due to low levels of pay.

"If you want continuity for your children, if you want the same carer looking after your child ... you need to pay them a decent wage", Ms Lagg said.

"I think dog groomers get more pay than we do for looking after dogs and we're looking after small human beings.

"It just doesn't make sense that we're not paid just better."

In February, United Voice, a union of more than 120,000 Australian workers, applied to the Fair Work Commission for a 35 per cent pay rise for childcare workers. It was rejected.

The Commission found that the union "elected to place all their forensic eggs in one basket ... without calling any evidence whatsoever".

United Voice assistant national secretary Helen Gibbons said it was time the government stepped in to raise the wages of early childhood educators.

"This is not about asking the parents to pay more," she said.

"This is about getting the federal government to fund this sector properly.

"It's just outrageous that in 2018, a workforce of such high skill can be paid so poorly."

Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said the government's role was not to run those centres but help families access affordable care.

"That's why the Turnbull government is overhauling child care subsidies and investing an extra \$2.5 billion to deliver more support for more Australians, benefiting around one million families," Mr Birmingham said in a statement.

"I expect all early learning and child care centres to value their employees and pay them as much as they can afford."

Early childhood director Ms Bose-Rahman asked: "Why shouldn't it be the government's role to fund early childhood education?"

“The education sector is highly supported by the government so why not us, why can’t we come under that banner?”

-reprinted from The New Daily

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