

A major new childcare report glosses over the issues educators face at work and why they leave ^[1]

Author: Rogers, M.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

The Productivity Commission has just released a major report as part of its inquiry into early childhood education and care.

The draft recommendation that all children under five should have access to three days a week of “high quality” early education is grabbing headlines.

But if this is going to happen, we need a workforce to provide it. And in its report, the commission glossed over educator burnout and their working conditions. This is what makes it so difficult to retain staff.

Our research shows why this needs to change.

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Vacancies at ‘record highs’

Early childhood educators are passionate about their jobs and well trained, but they are leaving the sector in droves.

The commission’s report notes vacancies for early childhood education and care positions are at “record highs and vacancy rates are above those of the wider workforce”. It suggests the sector has more than 5,000 vacancies Australia wide.

This figure does not consider the early learning services that have closed, reduced their capacity or simply stopped advertising because of low staff.

Our research

Our previous research showed educators around the world (including Australia) are at risk of burning out. This is due to inadequate support from their workplaces, a focus on collecting administrative data over interacting with children, low pay and low status.

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During COVID early childhood educators kept working but were not prioritised for vaccinations, despite constant contact with parents in high-risk jobs. New requirements from health authorities were constant and services often had to work out-of-hours to implement them at little notice.

As one interviewee told us:

"No wonder we are burnt out when even our weekends and annual leave are interrupted."

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We need to do 4 things

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1. fund wellbeing programs, including, peer support, mentoring programs, coaching and counselling for early childhood educators
2. provide incentives for educators to work in “childcare deserts”, where services are scarce (this includes regional, rural and remote areas and poorer metropolitan suburbs)
3. overhaul administrative burdens
4. make early learning part of the education system to improve educators’ pay, status and conditions.

Until system-wide issues are addressed and governments prioritise educator wellbeing, we are not going to get the workforce we need to educate and care for young children in Australia.

Related link: A Path to Universal Early Childhood Education and Care: Draft report [3]

Region: Australia and New Zealand [4]

Tags: burnout [5]

child care workforce [6]

workforce retention [7]

Source URL (modified on 1 Dec 2023): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/23/12/major-new-childcare-report-glosses-over-issues-educators>

Links

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