

Child care sector leaders have joined forces to urge the federal government to fund professional wages for child care workers. ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

At a summit of peak childcare bodies in Sydney on Wednesday, the leaders said funding professional wages would complete the reform process for the early childhood education and care system.

Early Childhood Australia chief executive officer Samantha Page said it was a fundamental children's rights issue.

"Ensuring high standards of education and care centres across the country, regardless of the service provider, must be a national priority," she said.

Sue Lines, assistant national secretary of the United Voice union representing child care workers, said the greatest barrier to providing quality education and care was the low pay and poor working conditions of workers in the sector.

"The \$18.58 an hour currently paid to Certificate III qualified educators is not enough to keep the current workers, let alone attract new workers," she said.

Ms Lines said a starting figure of \$26 to \$27 an hour, subsidised by the government, would provide a fairer wage for childcare workers.

She said that would help keep them in the system which was currently losing workers at a rate of around 180 a week.

The union had costed government subsidisation of childcare workers at \$1.4 billion, but that would be money well spent, Ms Lines said.

She said the National Quality Framework reforms introduced by the government were "fabulous" but professional wages were the "missing piece" of the reforms.

Ms Page said Australia was ranked 28th among OECD countries for childcare, but could do much better when New Zealand for example was ranked ninth.

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