

Greens seek boost for childcare teachers ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Early childhood teachers who work in childcare centres rather than schools would have the cost of their university studies reimbursed under a Greens proposal being considered by the federal government.

Next January 1, childcare centres must employ at least one teacher as part of a program to raise the quality of care and education provided in centres.

But centres are struggling to attract teachers, who can earn significantly more as preschool teachers in schools rather than doing the equivalent job in a childcare centre.

"Currently dozens of childcare workers leave the sector each week and it's not surprising when you consider that many people who work in the centres are paid less than those who clean them," a Greens senator, Sarah Hanson-Young, said.

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"As parents, we expect that the people caring for and educating our children to be qualified. Currently this just isn't the case and it needs to be fixed."

The scheme has been proposed by the Greens and will be released on Thursday.

The Department of Finance was given the go-ahead to do the costing by the Prime Minister's office, which is examining a suite of measures to make childcare more affordable and available.

The department estimated the program would attract 400 teachers to childcare centres in the first year at a cost of \$2.5 million.

The scheme would waive a year's worth of fee debt for early childhood education graduates for each year they taught full time in a childcare centre. Teachers who went to disadvantaged or remote areas would receive a waiver of two years' fees for each year of full-time work.

About a third of childcare centres now apply for exemptions from staff qualification requirements because they are unable to find suitable workers with the required qualifications.

"It is essential that we keep costs as low as possible to help mums and dads who are struggling to make ends meet, and this scheme, which adds to the wages of early childhood teachers, will improve the quality of care without increasing the cost to either centres or parents," Senator Hanson-Young said.

- reprinted from the Age

Region: Australia and New Zealand ^[2]

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