

**INQUIRY INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
CARE SECTOR IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am writing this submission, as a parent and as someone who has worked in the Education sector for 10 years. I have had many positive experiences with ECEC, but these have been overshadowed by experiences which have left me frustrated and concerned for Children, families and staff.

As a working and studying parent who had a limited support network when my daughter was young, I relied heavily on daycare - in particular a for-profit centre located near my home in the Northern Rivers. One evening my daughter (aged 3) was refusing to go to the toilet before her bath and when I enquired why, she stated "My vagina hurts". She then told me " put his fingers in there mummy". I contacted the police, as at the time I was not aware that was another child. my daughter was examined by a doctor, where they found bruising. This incident happened at the day care, in the toilets, where because of under the roof ratios, the children were not being adequately supervised. The daycare had suggested my daughter to return by saying they would make sure that supervision would be improved. This incident should never have happened, staff have a duty of care to watch children, especially in shared toilets. The fact that under the roof ratio is even allowed, when ratio numbers are already low, and do not account for children who require more support than others is appalling.

My experience as an ECT was short lived, I trained in Special Education and Primary Education, however after my contract for 2020 finished I was unable to find work, and decided to apply for ECT jobs, Securing a position at a for-profit centre in early 2021.

As a qualified teacher, I was paid \$25 an hour and they had signed me up for their Early years training organisation to do a diploma through them, which was to cost me \$10,000 out of pocket, and I was not allowed to do this qualification through TAFE or do a specialise University course. They also expected staff to purchase their own uniforms and resources were so limited we needed to purchase supplies for learning activities. We were given cleaning tasks that were to be done after our shift, meaning we were not paid for this unless our children left early, meaning that we could do it before the end of our contracted hours. Three times a day we were required to lift the tables from inside to outside for eating, which were heavy and awkward, and this caused damage to my back.

The ratio for the preschool room was 1:10 - however my room had multiple children who had disabilities and displayed behaviour that was dangerous and disruptive, I had no support, and this impacted the experience for all children in the room. At one point I needed to physically pick up a child who was choking another child over a toy. This child also bit, kicked, broke property and was aggressive to me and his peers. I had worked in special schools previously and was highly capable of supporting children and their behaviours, however this child, 2 other children who had disabilities and the rest of the class, with no support staff did not work. Parents were unsupportive and unwilling to access early intervention services such as OT's.

We were expected to take 3 photos of the children a day to send to parents, planning needed to be displayed in the room daily with observations, and story park updates. We were supposed to get planning time, however often this did not happen and the expectations were not plausible.

My second week at the centre they have assessment and rating, and they brought over additional staff from another centre, and told me not to talk to them about how long I had been there and to refer any questions to the director.

I resigned after calling in sick with gastro, with a doctor's note, and the centre director called me 35 times in a row demanding I attend work.

After this experience I began casual teaching and working in OHSC.

OHSC was a better experience, however the behaviour of the children was unacceptable, and policies did not allow us to suspend children, even after one child urinated in a cup and poured it on another child.

When I informed the parents of the child who had done this, they became angry and blamed me. The child ripped his shirt and told the parents that I had done that. They left, however at the end of the

day around 6.30 at night I noticed that one parent was lurking around the car park, and I needed to call someone to come escort me out. This had no repercussions for the parents of the children.

In 2023, I started working for a program designed to support Aboriginal Families and Children with accessing ECEC and capacity building.

I had one mother of a young boy with multiple disabilities disclose to me the treatment of his child at Pre-school. This treatment included Leaving him in soiled underwear for an entire day - on numerous occasions, causing painful irritation. His cousin (The child was non-verbal) told his mother how Educators had told other children to "just hit him back" and other behaviour towards him that was not supportive or inclusive.

The sector needs change, for-profit centres need to be held accountable for the conditions that they put children and staff in for their financial gain, assessment and rating needs to be stricter, centres should not be able to bring extra staff in to "look better". Under roof ratio should be abolished and ratio standards need to be improved. Educators need to be respected, paid for the work that they do, and not be treated as babysitters or centre cleaners. Behaviour that would be considered assault in the real world, should be met with consequences, and parent behaviour should be held to a standard. Children who have additional needs or behaviour that needs support should have access to support staff, and if they cannot access care safely, even with these supports then there needs to be specialised centres for them, a child who chokes other children, causes injuries to staff and damages property should be able to access a space with staff who know how to support them and have the resourcing to do so. Inclusion at the detriment of other children and staff is not true inclusion, and early intervention is required. Likewise, a child with additional needs should not have to sit in their own feces for an entire day and be subjected to violence - applying for support staff needs to be easy, with less red-tape and funding needs to be increased to do this.

We know the importance of ECEC, we are working towards Universal preschool, and the Government knows the links to quality ECEC to better outcomes for children, but this can't be done when the conditions are so poor and children are put at risk in places their parents send them thinking they are safe.

Things need to be done better, please.