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## Government must provide more money to early childhood care

Any move to extend subsidised childcare rebates to people who use in-home care must be paid for with additional funding to the early childhood sector, unions said today.

“Unions support a childcare system that is high quality, well regulated and puts the wellbeing of children first,” said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

“The Productivity Commission draft report into childcare recommends a significant watering down of childcare qualifications, which is deeply concerning,” said Ms Kearney.

“Current regulations require a 50-50 mix of diploma and certificate qualified early childhood educators. By recommending in-home educators only hold certificate three qualifications, children will not be getting exposure to the highest quality of care.

“In addition to this, the report recommends averaging out the ratios of staff to children, which will also compromise the quality of education and care.”

The Productivity Commission also recognises that early childhood educators are too low paid but doesn't make any recommendations to address this, said Ms Kearney.

“The Government has effectively hamstrung the Commission by stipulating there would be no more funding for early childhood care in the terms of reference.”

In-home care - including health, aged and disability care - are among the biggest labour market growth areas in Australia, Ms Kearney said.

“We need to make sure all of these workers, including those in early childhood care, are not in undervalued and unregulated positions.”

While the Productivity Commission report recommends that in-home childhood educators have national qualifications, it remains unclear about what wages, conditions and workplace protections would apply to them and how we can ensure a well regulated system, said Ms Kearney.

“Childhood educators who work in-home must be provided with quality jobs, including professional pay and entitlements and protection from exploitation in a domestic environment.”

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