

Submission Number: 82
Date Received: 7/6/2013



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I write to express the dismay of the Blue Gum Early Learning and Child Care Centre Management Committee at the conditions associated with the proposed \$300m wage increase for child care workers.

Our Management Committee commends the Federal Government for seeking to increase wage levels for child care workers.

However, our Committee is stunned that the federal government has introduced such divisive funding. It divides child care workers into haves and the have nots in the industry. It inequitably distributes government funds to a select few.

The proposed 2 year increase will only apply to up to 40% of the workforce. It is allocated on a 'first in, best dressed' basis. To ignore the 60% of staff who don't get it seems inequitable. Why not make a lower increase available to all workers? It also leaves workers vulnerable to a pay reduction when the funding expires.

It is also disappointing that the federal government has chosen to release information on the wage rates only to United Voice, while leaving child care providers without that relevant information. A formal release of the wage rates is required to progress an enterprise agreement, which is a condition of the federal funding. It seems that the federal government is seeking to give unionised workforces a financial advantage over non-unionised workforces, funded by the public purse.

You should also be aware that a union representative recently visited our centre and spoke to staff. The union representative told staff that they would not act for centre staff, unless they had at least seven of the 12 staff join a union (up from the 3 union members). She further advised that "it would be almost impossible to access the funding without us representing you." Staff were given union application forms 'to access the funding' that would cost new union member applicants \$12 a week. It seemed that staff were pressured to join the union.

The government's approach to the funding has also created considerable uncertainty for our Management Committee as we move to set the budgets for the 2013-14 financial year. It seems to have been progressed at the last minute in a very unprofessional manner.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I ask that Federal Parliament allocate government funds equitably to all child care workers with feasible funding conditions.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Cooper
Chairperson on behalf of the
BLUE GUM EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE