

**IN THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION
AT SYDNEY**

MATTER: AM2018/9

**INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA
APPLICANT**

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF LISA JAMES

I, Lisa James, of [REDACTED] in the State of New South Wales,
say:

Changes to Commonwealth Funding

1. In my statement of 19 July 2018, I referred to upcoming changes in Commonwealth funding for childcare, including the Child Care Subsidy. Those changes were introduced in July 2018.
2. Parents who are in work, education or training (or looking for work) receive a subsidy of up to 85% for each hour of fees (maximum hourly fee rate of \$11.77 per hour), depending on their combined annual income, in accordance with the following table prepared by the Department of Education:

Combined family income	Subsidy rate
Up to \$66,958	85%
Over \$66,958 to under \$171,958	Gradually reducing to 50%
\$171,958 to under \$251,248	50%
\$251,248 to under \$341,248	Gradually reducing to 20%

\$341,248 to under \$351,248	20%
\$351,248 or more	0%

3. The subsidy is subject to an activity test, which determines how many hours of subsidised child care a family is entitled to per week. The entitlement is determined by the activity level – in other words, how many hours they are spending in work, training and education, or looking for work – of the least active parent per fortnight, in accordance with the following table prepared by the Department of Education:

Step	Hours of activity per fortnight	Maximum number of hours of subsidy per child per fortnight
	Less than 8 hours	24 hours (only applies to families with incomes below \$66,958).
1	8 hours to 16 hours	36 hours
2	More than 16 hours to 48 hours	72 hours
3	More than 48 hours	100 hours

4. The Department of Education estimates that, as a result of these changes, approximately 1,000,000 families are better off and 280,000 are worse off. An ABC article setting out these changes, and summarizing this estimate, is annexure **LJ-1** to this statement.

Day to day work of early childhood teachers

5. As set out in my previous statements, I worked as an early childhood teacher in three different preschools from 1998 to 2001. From 2002 to 2007, I worked as a special needs teacher in a long day care centre.
6. Since 2007, I have been employed by the IEU as an Organiser in the early childhood sector. I have made at least a thousand visits to about 500 early childhood services since 2007. During these visits, I meet with teachers to discuss matters including:
 - a. changes to their role;
 - b. workload issues;
 - c. expectations of their employers and parents who use the service.
7. I also receive frequent enquiries by phone and email from members about these matters. In addition, I am the chair of the IEU Early Childhood Services Council, which consists of 10 early childhood teachers, directors and area managers in NSW and two other IEU officers. At this council, we discuss current issues facing the sector including the effect of teacher accreditation, changes to legislation, the National Quality Framework, documentation, changes to enrolment patterns and funding, and their effects on teachers' work.
8. I am accredited as a Proficient Teacher by NESAs. I am required to complete 100 hours of professional development each seven year (for part time teachers) accreditation cycle, which helps me keep up to date with developments in the sector.
9. Below, I give a summary of the day to day work of an early childhood teacher. Some changes are specific to preschool rather than long day care; where this is the case I indicate this.

Set up

10. When I was working as a preschool teacher, ECTs would generally spend the time between 8.15 and 9 setting up indoor and outdoor activities for the day, and updating documentation. Children were generally enrolled from 9am to 3pm in preschools.
11. Since the NSW government introduced Start Strong funding to preschools in 2016, children have begun attending services earlier. As the funding system requires children to attend 15 hours a week (600 hours a year), funded children must be enrolled for 7.5 hours a day, which is usually from 8am-3.30pm or 8.30am-4pm as opposed to 9am to 3am. Now, teachers have only fifteen minutes before the children arrive to set up. There is no time to complete documentation.

Morning indoor learning program

12. Once the children arrive, the teacher begins to implement the morning indoor learning program. This is usually composed of a variety of small-group activities, although the teacher may work with individual children at these small group activities. For example, a teacher might be working with a three-year old child on developing classification skills. This would involve:
 - a. observing the child's skill level and measuring it against normal developmental standards (a three year old would be expected to be able to group objects of the same colour together);
 - b. consider ways to scaffold (that is, provide just enough support and assistance to allow them to move forward on their own, without doing the task for them) the child's learning to the next stage (for example, classifying objects by two attributes like colour and size).
13. This scaffolding could be done by talking to the child about the two attributes and modelling the activity, with steady increases in difficulty as the child masters each step. It is important to keep the child engaged in the learning process as well, so the changes need to be focused on their interests and linked to their past experiences. Activities could include:
 - a. encouraging the child to talk about shapes in the environment;

- b. reading books about shapes;
 - c. providing a range of different objects to sort;
 - d. when moving to more complex classification tasks, developing a bingo-style game to play with the child, or moving to a grid board based matching task.
14. At all times during this process – which may occur over several weeks or months (depending on the complexity of the learning program and the child’s aptitude and interest) – the teacher has to constantly review the teaching strategies used and their effectiveness, with a view to changing strategies if the child is not demonstrating a greater understanding of the content or concept. Observations are recorded for each activity in order to plan future activities based on evaluations of the child’s learning and response to teaching strategies.
15. This is a much more complex and structured process than before the NQF and teacher accreditation were introduced. In particular, the teacher must link the observations (and the resulting educational program) to specific child development theorists and/or ELYF curriculum outcomes. The documentation requirements have also increased. When I was a preschool teacher, my weekly program for a whole group might fit on one A4 page. Now, teachers are keeping detailed programs of about that length for a single day. In addition, detailed portfolios for each individual child are maintained.

Morning outdoor learning program

16. After about an hour and a half, the teacher will transition the group to the outdoor learning program. Again, this is usually small group activities with individual goals / objectives for each child, where the teachers facilitate and analyse children’s play to determine their level of intellectual, linguistic, physical, social and emotional development.
17. Outdoor play is a particularly good opportunity to help the children extend their understanding of the world, which they are always seeking to do. One

example from my own experience involved a child I saw staring at hail on the ground after a storm. I approached the child and we had a conversation to the following effect:

Lisa: 'Where does hail come from?'

Child: 'It grows from the soil like grass.'

Lisa: 'Let's take a look around the playground. How did hail get on top of the fort if it grows up from under the ground?'

Child: 'Someone could have thrown it up there!'

Lisa: 'Where does rain come from?'

Child: 'Of course it comes from the sky, from clouds.'

Lisa: 'Could you pick up some hail in a bucket and bring it inside?'

18. Throughout the rest of the day, I reminded the child to check on the hail. After it melted, we had another conversation:

Lisa: 'What is in the bucket?'

Child: 'Water!'

Lisa: 'What is rain?'

Child: 'Water!'

19. This is much more effective than simply explaining the hail to the child. As well as learning about hail, they have developed their own problem-solving abilities and are beginning to learn about state changes from solid to liquid. After this conversation I might get the child to place a cup of water in the freezer to demonstrate it turning into ice. From there I might scaffold the child's learning by showing them how to conduct further investigations into the rain cycle or the relationships between solids, liquids and gases.

20. Sometimes wet weather means the outdoor program cannot be run, and the children have to stay inside. This is often challenging, as the children get frustrated with being in a confined space and have not been able to work off their excess energy. It also means the noise level in the centre is much louder, as everyone is inside all day. The high pitched modulation of excited children is often overwhelming, and it is not uncommon for staff to leave physically and mentally exhausted by the end of the day.

Lunch

21. At around 12.30, the children have lunch. In long day care, teachers are encouraged to eat with the children. This is itself an opportunity for learning, as it involves modelling behavior. At preschool, teachers usually do not eat with the children as they often take their own lunch break at this time and children bring their own lunches each day. However, children at preschool often need assistance to open lunch boxes, food wrappers and drinks.

Sleep

22. Previously, all children had a standard rest time after lunch for an hour. This was important programming time for teachers, who could use this relatively quiet time to work on their programming and daily journals.
23. Now, as our understanding of the need to cater for children's different needs for rest and sleep on an individual basis has developed, quality centres do not require children to have a standard rest time. Requiring children to sleep can cause them distress at the time (if they are not tired) and can disrupt their normal bedtime routine at home.
24. Regulation 81 requires centres to ensure that sleep needs are met with regard to the age, developmental stage and individual needs of the children. A standard rest time does not do this. Regulation 168 was amended in 2017 to require centres to have a specific rest and sleep policy.
25. What this means for teachers is that they have to program additional activities during what used to be sleep time, to teach children who are not resting on that particular day. This both increases the amount of teaching work done in a day and cuts down on the time to complete required

documentation (which, as set out in my previous statements, has increased).

Afternoon group activity

26. From 2pm, the ECT might implement a group time session (although I note the exact timing will vary from centre to centre, and many centres have a group time before lunch). There will be at least one group session per day. This might involve reading a story, singing songs and/ or having children bring an object from home and talk about this. As well as requiring the teacher to program an activity that is suitable for all children, they are required to manage a group of children and keep them on task. This is often an opportunity for children to learn important social skills, which they will need at school, like sitting quietly, following instructions and listening to their peers while they wait for their turn. This is vital to a child's successful transition to primary school.
27. Since the introduction of the NQF, group time activities must now be linked to EYLF outcomes and developmental theorists, as well as linked to current group projects and individual observations and evaluations. Teachers select resources and evaluate the group time program on a daily basis.
28. Since Start Strong was introduced, preschools have begun enrolling more students and daily occupation rates are higher. For example, a preschool licensed for 40 places might enroll as many as 100 students a week. In practice this means each teacher who was previously responsible for documenting learning and programming for 40 children (usually in two groups) now has 50, without any guaranteed increase in programming time. This was always the case in long day care.

Late afternoon activities

29. As set out above, before Start Strong most children at preschool finished at 3. Teachers would use the time from 3 to 4 to pack up learning environments, hold staff meetings, return calls, give prospective parents a tour, hold meetings with parents, develop and update individual education

plans for children with additional needs or individual behavior management plans for children with challenging behaviours.

30. Now, teachers conduct a second round of afternoon learning, which might be a second individual indoor program, for an hour.
31. After the children have left at 4, teachers then have the opportunity to perform the end-of-day tasks set out above. Some teachers are only officially rostered from 8.30 to 4.06pm, others from 8.15am to 4.15pm, meaning that in practice they have significantly less paid time to do all their previous non-contact work. Many teachers routinely stay back to finish.

Other daily tasks

32. Throughout the day, teachers complete complex observations and other learning documentation, and critically reflect on their teaching practice (on an individual and group level) to improve the quality of their teaching.
33. Teachers, who in my experience are usually appointed as the educational leader, also supervise the work of less-qualified educators. This can include delegating tasks such as incidental cleaning, supervising children at particular activities, or by reviewing their observations and learning stories to ensure they are appropriate. In long day care, which has younger children, this can also involve assisting children learning to walk and toilet training.
34. Parents contact teachers throughout the day, including through apps like Story Park as well as by phone, and expect quick responses. The accessibility of teachers to parents has increased significantly with the growth in technology.



.....
LISA JAMES

16 JUNE 2019