Position paper on Enterprise Bargaining 2005

Context
The Preschool Directors Association has developed this position paper to represent the views of its diverse range of members. PDA acknowledges the role of DECS and the AEU in the bargaining process which will commence at the end of October 2004. Since the most recent certified industrial agreement commenced there have been many changes to the work of a preschool director which have consequently impacted on the work of teachers and early childhood workers. These will be discussed throughout the body of this position paper. The following are presented in priority order.

1. Director Classification/Workload
It must be remembered that the role of a preschool director is multifaceted, as is the case with all leadership positions. Preschool Directors are full time teachers with planning and assessment responsibilities. In addition they are site managers with asset, financial, occupational health and safety, personnel and community responsibilities. Since the last period of bargaining, local management has been introduced to all sites which has added additional staffing responsibilities to the workload of directors. District involvement and subsequent responsibilities have also increased as DECS work towards a strengthened District model as is championed in Local Management structures and support materials. Many sites have also taken on new programmes such as the Inclusive Preschool Project (metro and country) and Rural Care.
All preschools, with few exceptions, operate without a base allocation of SSO/ECW Admin support which all junior primary, primary and secondary schools have (excluding special schools). It is time to redress this inequity within DECS and support the programmes run by preschools and their leaders through the allocation of ECW admin support over the warranted staffing allocation.
In the last bargaining process preschools received 10% of the $10m allocated to primary schools and preschools for additional administration/leadership.
The role of Director is becoming increasingly complex, for example new programmes are being undertaken by preschools and new models for early childhood require the Preschool Directors Classification to be extended.

PDA Recommends
That a review of PSD classifications be undertaken to extend the current range of levels to recognise the expertise and complexity of the role and to be more reflective of recent and future models of early childhood service delivery. In addition the formula for calculating PSD classifications needs to be reviewed.

That the additional administrative/leadership time allocated in the 2002 certified agreement be maintained.
That Preschools be allocated an ongoing entitlement of ECW hours, above warranted staffing, to assist with office tasks and that a new ECW classification be created to allow this to occur.

That director classification and salary be maintained for the duration of an individual’s tenure or placement in a centre, keeping in line with conditions enjoyed by principals.

2. Staffing
Staffing kindergartens to adequately provide quality programmes for children depends on the quality of the staff, the needs of the children, the ratios of children to teachers and ECW’s and the adequacy of time and support for the role of the Director (previously discussed). These factors have different impacts in metropolitan and country regions.

Warranted staffing is calculated according to the numbers of children who, on average attend in the first two weeks of each term. This number is always less than the numbers of children enrolled and creates added pressure on staff when all children attend, as is more frequently the case.

Children traditionally begin kindergarten on or after their 4th birthday. However, DECS enrolment policies also allow for younger children to be enrolled, under particular conditions including, identified special needs, identified gifted and talented, a non-english speaking background, indigenous or rural children where centres, due to their part time status, are unable to provide the approved number of sessions within the year before children go to school .... Children enrolled under these conditions provide extra work for staff and this is not acknowledged in the staffing formula.

The ratios which the warranted staffing formula are calculated refer only to staff. Staff in preschools are trained teachers and untrained early childhood workers. We believe that the ratio of early childhood workers to children should be reduced to acknowledge the qualifications of teachers and reducing the equal responsibility inferred for ECW’s by having the same weighting in the ratio.

PDA recommends

That warranted staffing be determined by actual enrolment numbers and not attendance figures.

That the staffing formula be reviewed to address the following

- meeting the needs of children with special enrolment.
- Indigenous children enrolled under early entry programmes at 3 years of age.
- be calculated at a time to more accurately reflect the current needs of the site and not the past needs.

That the staff:child ratio be changed to a teacher:child ratio

3. Salary
To maintain the excellent quality of programmes offered in state preschools it is essential to adequately remunerate personnel to attract committed staff. This is equally relevant for the roles of early childhood workers, teachers and directors.

PDA recommends

That directors, teachers and early childhood workers receive a salary increase to continue to attract committed staff through appropriate remuneration.

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