Position Paper on the Development of a Unified (Early Childhood) Professional Association

Context
The Preschool Directors’ Association of South Australia is currently an expanding and strong voice in the landscape of DECS and early childhood provision in South Australia. The Preschool Directors’ Association has been involved in discussions and forums about the development of a Unified (Early Years) Professional Association and will continue to investigate and monitor the feasibility of any involvement for our association.

Guiding Principles
1. The Preschool Directors’ Association recognizes early childhood as an internationally acknowledged and specialised area of education and care and supports the need for a strong and cohesive voice on issues of common interest within this sector to benefit children aged birth to eight and their families.
2. The Preschool Directors’ Association recognizes the importance of presenting a professional view of early childhood practitioners to enhance the status of the field generally.
3. The Preschool Directors’ Association recognizes that advocacy on behalf of children aged birth to eight and their families is a core role for the association.

Issues
Whilst the Preschool Directors’ Association acknowledges that the weight of voices within a linked early childhood association has the potential to raise the public and political profile for early childhood the following issues remain.

- The possibility that a unified association, with financial support from DECS, will lack neutrality in a political climate and potentially compromise positions on potential issues.
- The participatory structure of a UPA will potentially silence minority views and privilege dominant groups which could result in unbalanced outcomes.
- How the rhetoric of such an association can be meaningfully translated into worthwhile outcomes for all participants.
- Another early childhood association risks dissipating the good efforts of existing early childhood associations, particularly in relation to individual’s commitment of time.
- The potential loss of DECS funding for existing associations if funding from DECS continues for a UPA.
- Quality of outcomes related to a mount of effort for individual associations.
- Clarification is required regarding the membership, organisational or individual, of a UPA and the ramifications of both to membership of other associations and UPA.

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