
October 2007 - Call for 'paradigm shift' in early childhood care and education

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A new publication produced by the Centre for Community Child Health warns that Australian children may miss out on critical developmental and educational opportunities unless there is a 'paradigm shift' in the way Australia views care and education services.

Read the Centre for Community Child Health's Policy Brief 8: Early years care and education.

Research into early service provision

According to the latest issue of the Centre for Community Child Health's Policy Brief, there is a risk of children missing out on crucial development opportunities unless children's services universally provide comprehensive developmental projects, integrating play-based education and care from birth to school.

According to the Centre for Community Child Health's Director, Frank Oberklaid,

'In Australia there is an artificial distinction made between what constitutes child care and early education. Children learn and develop constantly, through a combination of experiences, within and outside the family home, regardless of the setting.'

The new issue of Policy Brief refers to research which strongly indicates children's success from school onwards hinges on quality early experiences, and that all children—particularly those from disadvantaged or marginalised families—benefit greatly from high-quality preschooling.

Change need in Australian services

According to the Centre for Community Child Health, the need for a 'paradigm shift' in the delivery of early childhood services is especially important because of the significant lag in funding to these services, compared to other first-world countries.

Additionally, as Dr Oberklaid points out, the trend toward parents spending more and more time at work means there is an as-yet-unmet demand for access to high-quality comprehensive services.

'Parents shouldn't be made to choose between "care" and "education" for their children. Access to a single, integrated

service offering high quality care and education should be the right of every child.'

The problem is further compacted by the large number of early childhood practitioners without base qualifications:

'The early childhood field needs to move towards a mandated entry qualification for service providers working with children and families, which encompasses the combined competencies of care and teacher training.'

Read the Centre for Community Child Health's Policy Brief 8: Early years care and education.

Related reading

View these related items on the Early Childhood Australia:

- Early Childhood Australia letter to COAG
- October 2007 - Call to alter national law on childcare ratio
- September 2006 - OECD report: Australia lowest in early childhood investment

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