



OMEP Australia Ltd

Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire
World Organisation for Early Childhood Education
Organizacion Mundial para la Educacion Preescolar
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South Australian Chapter

This submission to the *Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education & Care* is from the **South Australian Chapter of OMEP Australia**.

OMEP, *Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire* (OMEP) is known in English as *The World Organisation for Early Childhood Education* and is a non-profit, non-party-political, non-sectarian, charitable organisation of which OMEP Australia and the South Australian Chapter are a part.

OMEP was founded in 1948 in response to concern for the many displaced children in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. As can be seen from the international version of the title, above, the principal concern was for pre-school children. This is subject to interpretation as the year at which school begins varies between countries. We believe that this is significant. Any decision regarding children in early childhood should take account of all children from birth to 8 years of age, which is the internationally recognised definition of early childhood. Although developmental concerns are sometimes separated into 0-3, 3-5 and 5-8 years, we contend that 0-8 years should be considered as a seamless pathway for early childhood.

OMEP(SA) CONCERNS

1. As stated above, early childhood must be considered as birth to 8 years of age.
2. The current government focus in discussion relating to provision of early childhood education and care seems to be largely economic. It overlooks the importance of the parents as the first educators and carers of their children. Likewise in most families there is no-one who cares more about children than their parents. Much publicly available information seems to suggest that for the very young, centre-based child care is the best option. How does this equate with tearful goodbyes, separation anxiety, and myriad illnesses in the very early years as well as the need to develop resilience for which some children may not be ready? How does this affect the confidence of children and parents?
3. For parents who elect to be home carers for their children, especially in the very first years, there can be a range of ways to achieve this: job sharing, part time employment for all parents which allows the +return to previous employment conditions as soon as this is feasible, working at home for one parent on a rotating basis with the other parent to do the caring, a subsidy for parents who elect to be carers, which would be far less costly than the enormous subsidies which go to the provision of centre-based child care.
4. None of the above is to question the importance of quality child care, but merely to emphasise that parents are the first educators of their children and can be supported in caring for their children in

alternate ways. Many are supported by diligent and concerned grand-parents who likewise deserve support in a role which can be exhausting, especially for older people. A subsidy for child caring grand-parents, as proposed for child caring parents in 3 above, would again be cheaper than subsidies for centre-based child care. These approaches might free up child care availability for other families.

5. The qualifications for teachers and educators should be soundly based on an understanding of child development, social, emotional, physical and intellectual, from birth to 8 years. Often there seems to be an over-emphasis on cognitive development and 'readiness' for formal school.

6. Attachment theory emphasises the importance of the opportunity for children to build trusting relationships. In centre-based child care this implies the importance of continuity of care. This can be difficult where carers have shifts which are shorter than the time for which the child is in care. Imagine the difficulty for a child new to a care situation or school, who must go from before school care, to a school day, to after school hours care, sometimes in company with much older children. A similar situation exists with young children going to centre-based care early in the day, followed by kindergarten and then returning to centre-based care in the afternoon. Days of early care and education are tiring for children. Consider the state of a young child who has navigated all of this when finally meeting with a parent tired from a day at work. In such a situation there should be a staff member who has traversed at least a large part of the day with that child.

7. The salaries of staff in child care should be commensurate with the value of their service to the community. The educators with minimal qualifications receive especially low remuneration. A teacher with a 4 year degree is often tempted to seek better paid employment in another sector.

8. The proliferation of child care for profit continues to make for ever increasing costs for parents. Where subsidies to parents rise, very often, so do child care fees. Quality care is expensive, especially if the provider must make a profit.

Yours sincerely,

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For and on behalf of the
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