



QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION

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Friday, 24 April 2009

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Early Childhood Education



CHAPTER BRIEFING No. 4

ACSEA provides incorrect information to committees

Dear Colleagues

The Australian Community Services Employers Association (ACSEA) has consistently in recent years struggled to properly represent the interests of its members and at the same time has demonstrated little regard for the legitimate considerations of employees in the Early Childhood Education sector.

Communications from ACSEA to its members have increasingly been characterised by inaccuracies, misrepresentation and falsehoods.

However, ACSEA has plumbed new depths with its correspondence to committees dated 17 April 2009.

In a series of gratuitous criticisms of QIEU and its members the correspondence is a catalogue of self justification for either doing nothing, or when something has been done, doing it in a way that is prejudicial to the long term interests of the Early Childhood Education sector.

In the event your committee raises the ACSEA correspondence with you, we set out below the facts of the matter.

ACSEA Statement #1

“The ACSEA had requested written proposals from QIEU last year but those proposals were only received during the first week of April.”

The Facts

This statement is incorrect and misrepresents the matter.

- On 3 June 2004 your union provided the ACSEA with detailed proposals in relation to a number of claims on behalf of employees in early childhood education. One of those proposals related to new wage rates for assistants.
- At a meeting in March 2007 your union provided comparisons between the rates paid to assistants in early childhood education and the rates paid to employees under childcare

awards. These comparisons supported our claim that the wage rates for assistants should be reviewed.

Late last year ACSEA asked for details of the QIEU claim - again QIEU responded by referring to our earlier documents and indicating that any further proposals would need to be the subject of consultation with affected members.

- Notwithstanding the fact that QIEU had both provided the information previously and reminded ACSEA of that fact, additional copies were provided in April this year.

If ACSEA had been truthful with committees they would have reported that QIEU had already provided the information and it was only when it appeared that ACSEA could not find the information that QIEU then gave additional copies to the ACSEA in the first week of April.

ACSEA Statement #2

“It is interesting to note that, during the several discussions already held, QIEU has not specifically raised the topic of an immediate increase in wages for their members ...”

The Facts

This statement misrepresents the matter.

- During a meeting held on 7 October 2008 the ACSEA and QIEU agreed as follows:

“It was decided to await the Queensland government decision in relation to the identification of wage increases. It was agreed that the intention would be to avoid delays or problems resulting from different dates.” (Extract from the agreed minutes of the meeting.)

Therefore, rather than implying criticism of the actions of QIEU, ACSEA should have been honest with committees in relation to what was agreed in discussions last year.

- Employees who have been employed in early childhood education for a number of years will remember that there has often been concern in relation to the operative date for wage increases. In the past both QIEU and ACSEA have supported the nexus between the wage rates paid to employees in early childhood education and those paid to teachers employed by Education Queensland. Indeed the existing DECKAS funding model is built on the assumption that wage rates will be similar between the two sectors.
- Initial meetings took place between ACSEA and QIEU late last year. A further meeting was scheduled for 4 February 2008, but that meeting was cancelled by ACSEA. Between 4 February and 14 April ACSEA refused to set another meeting date. Discussions to identify a mutually suitable date are now occurring.

ACSEA Statement #3

Change to DECKAS

ACSEA finally gets something correct in stating that a new funding model is being considered to replace the existing DECKAS.

However, whilst the Queensland government is considering a proposal that the funding model will operate on a per capita basis, this proposal is not final government policy.

- Your union has, and will, strongly argue that a per capita funding model is inappropriate for early childhood education.
- An option is for ACSEA to join with QIEU in arguing that per capita funding models will not work for early childhood education. Another (less acceptable) option would be for ACSEA

to meekly accept whatever is said to them and not argue on behalf of the industry they purport to represent.

ACSEA Statement #4

“The union also appears to be trying to ignore the fact that the State Minister for Industrial Relations has already announced that all industrial relations will be transferred to the federal government.”

The Facts

- To the best of our knowledge no such statement has been made by the State Minister or any other representative of the Queensland government. Whilst the federal government has introduced new industrial laws, the question of the extension of those laws to cover community kindergartens is still to be determined.
- However, so that there is no confusion, QIEU has approached the Queensland government to seek clarification of this matter.

ACSEA Statement #5

“The federal commission has held two hearings about a proposed national children’s services award to include all types of children’s services (including preschools/kindergartens).”

The Facts

- The federal commission (AIRC) has held one hearing in relation to “educational services (other than higher education)” where the issue of early childhood education has been considered. This hearing took place on 17 March 2009. Prior to this hearing Livingstones Australia (the representative of both ACSEA and the Australian Childcare Centres Association) submitted a written proposal in relation to award coverage. That submission states, in part, as follows:

“As part of the modernisation process the commission [AIRC] has separated awards along industry lines. It appears that the commission is of the view that the “preschool sector” falls within the educational services (other higher education) industry.”

“In our submission we disagree with that assertion to the extent that it is the commission’s view that teachers/ancillary staff who are not employed in schools should fall within the educational services industry.”

“In our submission such employees (ie employees in the industry who are not employed by schools) should fall within the children’s services/early childhood education industry.”

Page 11 of the ACSEA and ACCA Submission dated 6 March 2009

- The ACSEA representative confirmed their position on transcript when he stated that ACSEA and the Australian Childcare Centres Association:

“clearly seek a single award covering what we say is the children’s services and early education industry.” and “a combined award covering children services workers and teachers seems to be a common objective and given the size of the industry we say it should be treated separately and included in [the health and welfare services industry in] stage 4.”

Transcript of hearing 17 March 2009, PN 456 and PN 459

- The AIRC did conduct a further hearing specifically in relation to the Non-Government Schools sector on 24 March 2009 in relation to the “educational services (other than higher

education)". The Commissioner conducting that hearing, in opening the proceedings, stated:

"I'm particularly interested, I suppose today, in feedback views discussion with you about matters that are relevant to the Non-Government Schools sector and particular issues in that area."

Transcript of hearing 24 March 2009, PN 1049

The hearing was not about the Early Childhood Education sector.

ACSEA Statement #6

"ACSEA is about representing the best interests of its members."

The Facts

- Community kindergartens exist to provide an educational program to young children. Such a program can only be delivered by university qualified early childhood teachers and trained and committed assistants. The provision of wages and conditions of employment which are comparable to other education professionals is fundamental to achieving this outcome.
- The interests of kindergartens are in the provision of a quality education program for the children, not in the creation of an 'us and them' mentality and conflict between committees and their committed and professional staff.

The position of QIEU on behalf of employees

For its part, your union on your behalf has consistently, and vigorously, argued for:

- Wage rates and conditions of employment which are comparable with Education Queensland;
- The retention of Early Childhood Education in the education sector, and the clear recognition of employees as education professionals;
- Negotiations for a replacement agreement which protects and enhances the wages and working conditions of employees.

ACSEA need to receive a clear message that its advocacy for its part needs to be consistent with these matters.

We invite members to affirm what we value for the Early Childhood Education sector by completing the attached Feedback sheet.

Kind regards

TERRY BURKE
GENERAL SECRETARY



your rights at work
worth fighting for

Feedback

24 April 2009

Members employed at

(Name of Centre)

Affirm the following general principles:

- Wage rates and conditions of employment for Early Childhood Education employees should be comparable with those applying in Education Queensland;
- Early Childhood Education must remain in the education sector, and employees must be clearly recognised as education professionals;
- Negotiations must resume immediately for a replacement Agreement which protects and enhances the wages and working conditions of employees.

AGREE / NOT AGREED

**Please post (PO BOX 418 FORTITUDE VALLEY 4006) or fax (3839 7021)
to the QIEU office by Monday, 11 May 2009**