



Sector Changes Welcomed But Workers Still Waiting

Through the Big Steps in Childcare campaign, Early Years Professionals have been fighting for quality care and quality jobs. Over the past 2 years United Voice Childcare members have lobbied to win recognition of skills, nationally improved ratios, a nationally consistent curriculum and standards, and more.

Whilst welcomed changes, these reforms have done little to address the greatest challenge facing the ECEC sector today: The struggle to attract and retain enough passionate, committed, quality staff.

Below: Early years educators, leaders, and directors at the Big Steps ECEC Workforce Crisis Meeting in April. Guest speakers included Ros Cornish from ECA, as well as members, directors and parents supporting Big Steps.



Since the April Crisis Meetings directors and educators all over the nation have been getting active. They have written and called other directors and educators to invite them to be part of Big Steps. They have invited their colleagues to join their union at network meetings and staff meetings. They have attended Working Group meetings in their local area so that members can better step up, own and drive their Big Steps campaign.

The next Big Step will be the **ECEC Workforce Winter Summits** in each state, at which Working Group members are hoping to see thousands of Centre Directors, Leaders, Educators, Parents and supporters attend to be part of the solution. Please see the attached registration form for further information. We hope to see you there.

The National Quality Reforms require more people to be qualified, and more people to stay in the sector, but how is that possible when 15,000 educators are leaving the ECEC workforce each year?

Those who do work in the sector are passionate about the work they do. Yet this passion is hard to sustain when Early Years Educators face such negative factors as pay barely above the minimum wage, a lack of recognition, limited career pathways and difficulties in gaining access to training.

As such, United Voice Childcare members are ramping up their Big Steps campaign. Childcare union members are calling on the federal government to increase funding to the sector by \$1.4million to support *professional* wages for professional Early Years Educators.

Big Steps in Childcare

The first Big Step this year was the April Crisis Meeting. All around the country hundreds of directors and educators came together to say: enough is enough - we deserve recognition, we deserve professional wages.

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We've come to a point now where we're being real about what's happening, we're talking about the crisis ... we're going to the government, and we're going loud because we need to deal with this crisis."

-Monique Wickham, Educator, Lady Gowrie

— Union dues increase —

From July 1st 2011 union dues will increase in line with CPI. The change ranges from 20c to 30c per week. You can find out your exact rate by looking online at www.unitedvoice.org.au or ringing your union team on 03 6220 3222



Leader Spotlight

Name: Rebecca Hayes

Centre: Lady Gowrie University South

Role: Centre Manager



Representatives from each of the state Big Steps Working Groups recently met in Sydney for leader development training, and to help make important decisions about the direction of the Big Steps campaign. Rebecca Hayes, co-manager of Lady Gowrie Child Centre in Sandy Bay, was there to represent Tasmania. *"The training was a great training day and a wonderful opportunity to create a strong networking group across Australia. Together we discussed many strategies and ideas to support the leaders group in each state prepare for the July/August summits and to keep momentum throughout the campaign,"* Rebecca observed.

Rebecca then organised to share what she had learned with other Tasmanian leaders and directors involved in Big Steps. *"We had a great response from everyone and felt that we had clear understanding of where we were headed and what we need to do to achieve our goals. It was a powerful message that we the working group were building the engine to drive the campaign and are committed to connecting with others in the sector to promote the July summit. We ourselves are accountable for making things happen,"* she said.



Left: Some of your Big Steps in Childcare national member representatives at the training day in May 2011.

You can see each leader's personal video message online at www.bigsteps.org.au



The Big Steps campaign is about quality care and quality jobs.

It is an exciting and inspiring example of what can be achieved when workers take ownership of and drive their campaigns themselves. There are many ways members can be more involved, for example you could...

Register for info & updates online at www.bigsteps.org.au

Attend your local working group meetings

Attend the ECEC Workforce Summit in your region

Step up and become the union leader for your centre

Like us on facebook www.facebook.com/BigStepsTas

For more info on any of the above, talk to the union leader in your centre or contact us in the office on 6220 3222