

CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESOLUTION ACTU CONGRESS 1997

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ACTU is committed to a system of high quality affordable children=s services encompassing centre-based care, family day care, preschool services, out of school hours programs, vacation care, occasional care and respite care.

1.2 This commitment recognises:

- 1) the rights of working people, including shift workers, to have access to a range of high quality affordable children=s services;
- 2) the rights of workers in children=s services to equitable recompense and recognition; and
- 3) that high quality children=s services are an investment in our children=s futures.

1.3 The ACTU believes:

- 1) that quality children=s services improve the educational opportunities of children;
- 2) that investment through public spending on children=s services is therefore an essential responsibility of national economic policy;
- 3) that if members of the Australian community are to have enhanced capacity to lead full and productive lives, families must have access to a system of quality and affordable children=s services; and
- 4) that workers employed in children=s services should be remunerated in line with an equitable recognition of their skills and experience.

1.4 The ACTU therefore reaffirms its commitment to a system of children=s services which is characterised by:

- 1) a comprehensive range of services to meet the needs of families, including those families whose wage-earners are shift workers;
- 2) the expansion and maintenance of a National accreditation system for all services types, with a mandatory link to the receipt of all forms of government funding including fee relief;

- 3) planning mechanisms which ensure equity in service development;
- 4) services at affordable prices;
- 5) adequate and equitable government funding which ensures access by all sectors of the community; and
- 6) insistence upon proper award wages and conditions and training for all workers employed in the delivery of all forms of children=s services.

1.5 We note with concern that the Coalition Government=s cuts of \$800m to the sector and that fees have risen significantly, causing women to opt out of the full-time workforce. These changes have the potential to result in severe structural impacts on the viability of the system as a whole, and in particular, on the community based not for profit sector.

1.6 We endorse the continuation of the not for profit community owned sector as an integral provider of children=s services, and call for funding arrangements to ensure its on-going viability.

2 PROGRAM OF ACTION

2.1 The ACTU is therefore committed to a program of action to defend and extend a system of quality and affordable children=s services in Australia:

- 1) The ACTU will continue to engage with the Australian community to promote and defend the value of children=s services, both to the nation and to families.
- 2) The ACTU will actively pursue the establishment of award coverage for family day care workers as well as improved wage levels for workers in all children=s services in accordance with levels of experience, responsibility and training.
- 3) The ACTU will engage in discussions and negotiations with relevant political parties to seek the protection and strengthening of Australia=s system of affordable, quality children=s services.
- 4) The ACTU will actively campaign against the inappropriate application of competition models and voucher based funding arrangements throughout children=s services.
- 5) The ACTU in committing itself to this program of action will continue to provide resources and support.