

CHILDRENS SERVICES
Part of Social Justice Policy
ACTU Congress September 1995

17.1 The ACTU supports the provision of a range of good quality children's services available on a universal basis as fundamental to equal access to the paid workforce and as an industrial issue.

Priorities

17.2 Congress reaffirms its commitment to all previous Child Care and Children's Services policy and strategy documents.

17.3 Congress believes it is necessary to continue the following priorities of action:

- (i) Provision of a comprehensive range of children's services to meet the needs of families;
- (ii) The achievement and maintenance of high quality children's services through the establishment of a National Accreditation system, for all service types, which has a mandatory link for Child Care Assistance funding purposes and the extension of the Accreditation system to homebased care and Out of School Hours Services;
- (iii) Development of proper planning mechanisms to ensure children's services are provided where necessary on an equitable basis for all families;
- (iv) Delivery of children's services at affordable cost for parents;
- (v) Commitment to adequate and equitable government funding;
- (vi) Ensuring the commitment of employers to supporting and resourcing work related childrens and family services; and
- (vii) Insistence upon proper award wages and conditions and training for all workers employed in the delivery of children's services including the introduction of award wages and conditions for homebased care as a pre-requisite to accreditation.

Principles

17.4 Congress requests the ACTU Executive and Affiliates to undertake programs designed to implement these priorities in accordance with the following principles:-

Range of Children's Services

17.5 Support for a variety of children's services including long day care, extended hours care, before and after school, vacation (year round) care, occasional, and family day care and preschools.

17.6 This range of services should be delivered either in association with workplaces, school premises, or located in residential communities.

17.7 The particular needs of such groups as the disabled, migrant families, aboriginal families, low income earners, single parents and shift workers should be recognised in the provision of services.

High Quality Children's Services

17.8 The ACTU supports high quality children's services which are characterised by a good adult-child ratio, staffed by skilled and suitably qualified workers, and a suitably equipped, stimulating and caring environment, which takes into account the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of children.

17.9 The ACTU supports the development and maintenance of proper standards, preferably national, which are defined and enforced in regulations for all service types. These standards should not reduce existing regulations, standards and practices.

17.10 The ACTU supports the extension of accreditation to all children's services especially Family Day Care and After School Hours Care.

Proper Planning Mechanisms

17.11 The ACTU supports planning mechanisms through which the likely Children's Services needs of the community are assessed and met.

Affordable Services

17.12 The ACTU supports as a long term objective the provision of universal delivery, free of charge. In the short term fees paid by parents should be income-related, with adequate levels of government financial assistance to low income families. All assistance provided by government directly to families should be income related.

Government Funding

17.13 The ACTU supports the allocation of sufficient funds by government to ensure the maintenance of affordable high quality children's services. This includes the proper indexing of subsidies and an on-going review of the fee relief systems.

Award Wages and Conditions

17.14 The ACTU supports appropriate award coverage for workers engaged in areas of the children's services industry not currently covered by awards, in particular family based child care workers.

17.15 The ACTU supports the maintenance of proper award wages and conditions including access to training and career paths for all workers employed in the children's services industry.

17.16 The ACTU supports government funding only to those children's services which provide award wages and conditions where awards exist and enterprise agreements which maintain appropriate award wages and conditions.

17.17 The ACTU expresses concern at the failure of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to establish award coverage for all family based child care workers.

17.18 The ACTU and affiliates will continue to seek award coverage for Family Based Child Care workers.

17.19 The ACTU calls on the Federal Government to support the right of all Family Based Child Care workers to award coverage and to provide adequate funding to facilitate the cost of implementing such an

award and to ensure that Family Based Child Care Workers have the same access to workcover and superannuation entitlements as other child care workers.

17.20 In achieving this objective, the Federal Government is called upon to actively co- operate in seeking award coverage for such workers.