

CHILDREN' SERVICES POLICY 1989

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 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.

2. PRIORITIES

2.1 Congress reaffirms its commitment to all previous Child Care and Children's Services documents and to those aspects of the ACTU Working Womens Charter and Action Program for Women Workers relating to child care.

2.2 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
- (iii) Development of proper planning mechanisms to ensure child care facilities are provided where necessary.
- (iv) Delivery of children's services at affordable cost for families.
- (v) Commitment to proper government funding.
- (vi) Support for proper award wages and conditions and training for all workers employed in the delivery of children's services.

3. PRINCIPLES

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

3.2 Range of Children's Services

- (i) Support for a variety of children's services including long day care, extended hours care, before and after school, vacation, occasional, and family day care.
- (ii) This range of services should be delivered either in association with workplaces, school premises, or located in residential communities.
- (iii) The particular needs of such groups as the disabled, migrant families, aboriginal families, low income earners, single parents and shiftworkers should be recognised in the provision of services.

3.3 High Quality Children's Services

- (i) 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.
- (ii) The ACTU supports the development and maintenance of proper standards, preferably national, which are defined and enforced in regulations.

3.4 Proper Planning Mechanisms

The ACTU supports planning mechanisms through which the likely child care needs of the community are assessed and where necessary, provision made to include child care facilities.

3.5 Affordable Services

The ACTU supports as a long term objective the provision of universal delivery, free of charge. Until this is achieved mechanisms should be created either within the taxation system or within the fee structure to assist parents with the cost of child care. In the short-term, fees paid by parents should be income-related in order to provide maximum assistance to low income families.

3.6 Government Funding

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.

3.7 Award Wages and Conditions

- (i) The ACTU supports appropriate award coverage for workers engaged in areas of the child care industry not currently covered by awards.
- (ii) The ACTU supports the maintenance of proper award wages and conditions including access to training and career paths for all workers employed in the child care industry.
- (iii) The ACTU supports government funding only to those children's services which provide award wages and conditions where awards exists.