

IN THE FAIR WORK COMMISSION

Matter No: B2023/538

Application for the FWC's approval of a supported bargaining authorisation.

STATEMENT OF TABITHA PEARSON

I, Tabitha Pearson, of [REDACTED] Queensland, state as follows:

1. I am the Chief People Transformation Officer at G8 Education Ltd (**G8**).
2. I make the following statement on behalf of G8 in support of the Application for approval of a supported bargaining authorisation (**Application**).
3. The Application is in respect of the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector (**ECEC Sector**), limited to providers of long day care settings.
4. G8 is one of the ECEC sector employers included in the Application (**Respondents**). G8 has joined the Application by consent.

About G8 Education

5. G8 is a publicly listed company (ASX:GEM) and is one of Australia's largest providers of quality early childhood education and care.
6. G8 has grown from a family-owned and operated company with 30 centres in 2007, to a national brand with more than 430 centres across Australia, which operates under 21 brands. The centres are located in regional and metropolitan areas throughout Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.
7. G8 employs close to 10,000 team members and provides care and education to around 50,000 children across its centres nationally.

Team Members

8. Of G8's 10,000 team members, approximately:
 - a. 53% are employed on a full time basis;
 - b. 29% are employed on a part time basis;
 - c. 18% are employed on a casual basis; and
 - d. 98% are female.

Regulatory framework

9. G8 is governed by the National Quality Framework (**NQF**), which comprises of:
 - a. Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations;
 - b. National Quality Standard;
 - c. Assessment and Rating Process;
 - d. National Learning Frameworks.
10. The NQF establishes a quality monitoring and improvement system that addresses structural and process quality, and covers all ECEC sector employers. The retention of staff is a key determinant in the quality of the provider.

Qualifications held by centre-based team members

11. The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (**ACECQA**) is the National Authority which regulates the ECEC Sector.
12. Under the National Laws, G8 must meet relevant educator-to-child ratios in centre-based services by ensuring that 50% of educators have particular qualifications. This impacts how G8 rosters Team Members.
13. The ACECQA requires that all employees must be either qualified or working towards a recognised ACECQA early years qualification. Team members must also hold a current Working With Children Check.
14. A person is considered a diploma qualified educator if they hold an approved diploma level qualification, or their qualification was completed before 1 January 2012 or the ACECQA has assessed the qualification to be equivalent to an approved diploma.
15. G8's centre-based team members hold one or more of the following qualifications:
 - a. Certificate III in early years education and care;
 - b. Diploma in early years education and care;
 - c. Advanced Diploma in early years education and care;
 - d. Bachelor of Education in early years education.
16. The Certificate III qualification is the most common qualification held by team members.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

17. G8 team members are covered by the *Children's Services Award 2010* and the *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020*.
18. There is no enterprise bargaining agreement that applies to G8 team members.
19. G8 has a relatively high degree of dependence upon the two Modern Awards to underpin the terms, conditions and pay of team members.

20. Most team members are classified as a Children's Services Employee Level 3.1 (Certificate III qualified). This is because the Certificate III is the most common qualification held by team members.

Funding Arrangements

21. The primary funding stream for all Respondents to the Application is through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) System.
22. In addition to the CCS, providers with pre-school and kindergarten programs receive funding through the State specific jurisdictions to support the employment of Early Childhood Teachers.

Other matters

23. G8 team members communicate the ability to make a difference in the educational and care outcomes for children and their families is one of the primary reasons why they come to work every day and remain in employment with G8. These findings are consistent with external research carried out on the drivers of ECEC workforce attraction and retention.
24. Educators consistently provide information to researchers in relation to how their level of pay makes them feel undervalued because it does not reflect either the professionalism of their work or the immense social and emotional value they add to their communities.
25. We currently note unsustainably high turnover rates in our team members, and attribute this to the above.
26. Any uplift in remuneration for team members will require further funding support for ECEC Sector employers from the Federal Government. The only other available avenue to fund an uplift in remuneration for team members would be through increasing fees for families, which is not aligned to the continued focus of improving affordability of care.
27. I have read the content of this statement and am satisfied that it is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Signed:



Tabitha Pearson

Dated:

28 July 2023

Witnessed:



Rachel Beckett