



Brigitte Mitchell

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I am an EC teacher with a four-year Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) from Western Sydney University. I completed this degree while working casually in the sector after completing a Diploma of Children's Services and Certificate III in Children's Services traineeship. I have 18 years' experience in the sector working with children aged birth to eight years and have been a qualified teacher for 12 years. In this time I have worked for local government and community-based centres, as well as NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Communities settings. I have been a union delegate, branch councillor and activist for the United Voice Big Steps and Quality Matters Campaigns since 2011. I am also a member of the Social Justice in Early Childhood group and have been a member of its annual conference organising committee since 2015. At the 2015 conference I presented part of a tribute to the late Elizabeth Dau, the editor of the first and second editions of *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood*. I am currently working as a teacher of two and three year olds in a WA child and family centre early learning unit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Promoting ECE to parents

I promote the importance of ECE to parents through my everyday conversations with them or through my documentation of children's learning. I do this by sharing my philosophy and research and theory in relation to their children's specific context. In documentation, as in conversation, I try to simply state in words and pictures what learning is occurring and why it's significant. I have also spoken to families regarding ECE industrial issues and/or asked them to be involved in actions such as petitions, rally days and media statements or writing.

Families are a very important and powerful part of children's early education and care. Therefore, issues affecting their educators and their education cannot be separated, so working collaboratively to share images and knowledge with families is embedded in my practice for today and tomorrow. Families can be strong advocates for their children alongside their teachers.

Promoting ECE to politicians

I promote the importance of ECE to politicians by writing them letters, sending them Tweets on Twitter or commenting on their Facebook posts, inviting them to visit my centre, visiting their offices, signing petitions to be delivered to them, speaking at party conferences, doing media comments and stories for print and television media on industrial issues and participating with questions and comments on the Q&A program, writing submissions and encouraging colleagues, education networks, families and friends to do so too. I refer to ECE policy, curriculum frameworks, research, theory, the UNCROC and the ECA Code of Ethics and read what politicians may value or have stated prior to actions. I have found telling 'my story' on why an issue is important to me is a powerful way to enact change too.

Being a teacher is political. Politicians can shape future laws and policy as our local members of parliament with their positions and portfolios. We also have a responsibility to hold them to account as part of big picture change for the ECE sector as advocates for young children as per the ECA Code of Ethics.

Promoting ECE to the general public

I promote the importance of ECE to the general public by meeting or tweeting celebrities or other journalists and activists to have as public supporters of ECE issues, attending rallies and public

actions by wearing promotional T-shirts, and speaking to the media in regard to contemporary issues at hand for ECE. This also includes print and TV stories or comments organised by our union. I find that talking or letting my networks know about this work provokes conversations with family and friends, which promotes awareness about ECE. I also find that general conversation about exactly what an ECE is and what its benefits are to children in the here and now and in a bigger picture way for society is also a way to promote its importance.

The general public is not embedded in the ECE profession and they vote and may have/ had young children or wish to do so. They are voters participating in a democracy and they may support measures taken relating to their future that is in ECE now. So making them aware of messages in regard to changes we as teachers want to see is vital.