Nice ladies as neoliberal leaders in early childhood: critique or compliance?

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We argue that the current neoliberal political context in Australia, and in much of the western world, has created an expectation that leadership in early childhood is best judged by the extent to which leaders support, encourage or enforce national quality standards. This has the unfortunate effect of de-professionalising early childhood leaders and creating a climate where conformity and compliance are valued, and challenging these hegemonic positions may even be perceived as being ‘anti-quality’ and not in the best interests of the early childhood sector.

We challenge the sector to reflect on the meaning of leadership: how to balance between leading for conforming to national standards and curricula, and leading the ongoing evolution of the profession through positive critique.