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Ease the burden on early childhood education

The IEU calls on the federal and state governments to come up with a rescue package that is equitable to all employers in the early childhood education sector at its National Cabinet meeting on Friday 3 April.

We urge the government to: provide an equitable viability package that will allow all centres keep paying wages to teachers and educators, and to keep services open for parents who need to meet work commitments. One way to achieve this is to permit all early childhood education providers that lose 30 per cent or more of their turnover to access the new JobKeeper program.

As it stands, many early childhood education providers will not be eligible for the JobKeeper program. While early learning centres listed as separate companies are likely to be eligible, some big providers will not be.

Goodstart, which has an annual turnover of just over \$1 billion, is required to demonstrate a loss of 50 per cent of its turnover before it would be eligible for the JobKeeper program. Goodstart has about 15,000 employees and educates and cares for 70,000 children throughout Australia. At the same time, G8 Education, which has 58,000 children enrolled and an annual turnover of \$930 million, will be eligible on a 30 per cent drop in revenue.

Many regional and remote preschools that receive most of their funding from the state government will also be ineligible. The sector as a whole employs 200,000 people.

“Advice from the Chief Medical Officer around physical distancing must be followed,” said IEUA NSW/ACT Branch secretary Mark Northam. “Adopting new procedures around pick up and drop off means teacher-child ratios need to be enhanced to ensure the safety of staff, students and parents.

“Let’s make it a level playing field,” Northam said. “All providers deserve a go so everyone employed in the sector can keep their jobs. Eliminate bureaucratic barriers that are preventing centres remaining open for children of essential workers in particular.”

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said childcare is crucial to keeping the economy running. And while Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan has already announced one assistance package, the \$14 million Community Child Care Fund Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity for early learning services whose viability is affected by coronavirus just won’t go far enough.

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 31,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

Authorised by Mark Northam, Branch Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT