

1 September 2022

## **Jobs and Skills Summit: Early childhood teachers seek sector-wide bargaining**

Union members throughout Australia are calling for urgent reform to industrial relations laws that have been stacked against them for decades, leading to nationwide wage stagnation.

“Early childhood teachers are a case in point – they’ve endured low pay for a long time, and now they’re leaving the sector in droves, leading to acute staff shortages,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Mark Northam.

“Sector-wide bargaining would be a big step in the right direction. Currently, early childhood teachers face an adversarial system – they have to negotiate in small workplaces with individual employers or volunteer committees who are unfamiliar with industrial relations laws, and as a result their salaries and conditions have not progressed as they should.”

The Independent Education Union of Australia, which represents the industrial and professional interests of degree-qualified early childhood teachers has a straightforward aim at the Federal Government’s Jobs and Skills Summit: grant early childhood teachers sector-wide bargaining.

IEU member and early childhood teacher Janene Rox is attending the Canberra summit. “We’re here to get support to continue working on industrial relations reforms around bargaining and gender pay equity so everyone’s on the same playing field,” Rox said.

The vast majority of early childhood teachers are women. Improving their pay, as well that of other low-paid sectors that also employ mainly women, such as aged care, disability care and community services would improve Australia’s poor record on gender pay equity.

“The national gender pay gap is 14.1 per cent, but for early childhood teachers it’s even wider,” Northam said. “Early childhood teachers should be paid the same as school teachers – they have the same university qualifications and undertake the same accreditation processes – they are the professional equals of their counterparts in schools.”

The early childhood sector is in great need of a bold new strategy. The ACTU is calling on the Fair Work Commission to “proactively tackle gender inequity across all its functions, including stronger Equal Remuneration Order provisions which do not require a male comparator”. The IEU endorses this clarion call for closing the gender pay gap.

The union aims to build on momentum from the Jobs and Skills Summit with its own roundtable featuring Federal Early Childhood Education Minister Dr Anne Aly on 4 November. Early childhood teachers from Queensland, NSW and the ACT will convene to talk with the Minister about various professional and industrial issues, including fair and just sector-wide bargaining.

### **Contacts**

**Mark Northam**, Secretary, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch, 0427 667 061

**Media:** Sue Osborne 0430 220 254 [sue@ieu.asn.au](mailto:sue@ieu.asn.au)

*The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 33,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.*

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