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Pay parity for early childhood teachers is not a revolutionary concept

Early childhood teachers in NSW are impatiently awaiting a commitment from the NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, Sarah Mitchell, to match the pay parity agreement announced today by the Victorian government. The Victorian announcement will see early childhood teachers finally paid the same rate as school teachers, the correct rate for their equivalent and often identical teaching qualifications.

“Pay parity isn’t a revolutionary concept,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary, Mark Northam. “Early childhood teachers and educators have been undervalued for too long.”

The IEU is calling on the NSW Premier to follow the Victorian government’s lead by ensuring improved funding leads directly to improved salaries for the sector. In particular, university degree qualified early childhood teachers should be paid the same as teachers in schools. Such a commitment would provide an investment in communities across the entire state that will pay dividends for generations to come.

“Teachers are teachers, regardless of whether their workplace is an early childhood centre, a preschool, primary school or high school,” said Northam.

“Our members don’t teach for the income, they teach for the outcome. They know they could find work in a primary school and increase the size of their pay cheque overnight, but a love of the work and a commitment to preparing the minds of our nation’s youngest people is what has kept them coming back day after day. The pandemic has shown them to be essential workers in every sense.”

Quality early childhood education is fundamental to supporting and promoting early childhood development. Pay parity is essential to attracting and retaining a quality workforce, safeguarding into the future the world-standard early childhood education and care that Australian families have come to rely on.

The IEU has been running a lengthy campaign in pursuit of improved pay for early childhood teachers, including complex proceedings before the Fair Work Commission. The union is awaiting the outcome of this landmark case.

“It’s time for governments to step up, acknowledge and address the chronic underpayment and underfunding that plagues this sector,” said Northam.

“Time and again, in study after study, report after report, the social and economic case for a properly funded and professional early childhood education and care sector has been proven.

“Without action, NSW and Australia risk being left behind.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post secondary colleges.

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