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## **Early childhood teachers union welcomes child safety legislation**

The union representing teachers in early childhood education and care welcomes legislation introduced to federal parliament today that would cut government funding from providers repeatedly failing safety requirements.

“The IEU supports cutting federal funding from providers that do not prioritise child safety and those that put profits ahead of the children they care for,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

The union welcomes a further package of reforms to boost child safety that will be the focus of an upcoming meeting of education ministers.

“Staff in the sector need mandatory training in their obligations and assurance of a safe mechanism for making a report when they are legally required to do so,” Matthews said.

The union also calls for providers to undertake compulsory training to ensure a child-safe environment.

The union welcomes plans for a nationwide register of early childhood educators and seeks clarification of what this register would mean for degree-qualified teachers who are already required to be registered under state laws.

The IEU calls for a clampdown on centres that manipulate staffing ratios to avoid their legal obligations of ensuring adequate supervision and prevent safety breaches.

“While CCTV has its place, it is no magic bullet – for example, it cannot be installed in baby-change rooms and bathrooms. And it is no substitute for a building a strong culture of child safety with well-trained, properly paid staff,” Matthews said.

The union is also concerned about reports from members that time is taken away from core duties of educating and caring for children by ancillary tasks such as cleaning and paperwork.

“Regulations must enhance the delivery of early childhood education and care, not reduce its quality,” Matthews said.

“Our members have always pushed for better pay, conditions and training to ensure higher standards of early childhood education and a strong culture of child safety.”

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

**Authorised by Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary**