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NSW Upper House inquiry – Union calls for child safety over profits

The union representing teachers in early childhood education and care in NSW and the ACT will today call for more reforms to build a much stronger child safety culture and restore confidence in the sector.

“Our members are appalled by media reports of abuse and mistreatment of young children, mainly in for-profit centres,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. “It is clear the sector needs urgent changes to rebuild a strong child safety culture.”

Matthews today (Wednesday 13 August) will give evidence at a hearing of the NSW Upper House inquiry into the early childhood education and care sector in NSW, alongside IEU organiser Lisa James and IEU member and Director of Cronulla Preschool Janene Rox.

The IEU’s [submission](#) to the inquiry, chaired by Greens MP Abigail Boyd, highlights how the profit motive hinders child safety and the quality of a service, with members reporting:

- managers and owners assaulting employees
- qualified teachers replaced with less-qualified staff
- requests for maintenance being ignored, which endangers children
- a lack of support for staff injured by children
- staff are discouraged from reporting incidents.

Teachers and educators are leaving the sector at unprecedented rates due to burnout and dissatisfaction, particularly from excessive workloads caused by the volume of paperwork.

Staff in some for-profit centres are also expected to perform duties outside their professional responsibilities such as cleaning toilets, mopping floors and cleaning windows.

The submission notes the regulatory framework applied in NSW is complex, cumbersome and takes teachers and educators away from their core duty of educating and caring for children.

“Our members report feeling demoralised, exhausted and stressed due to the extensive documentation required for accreditation,” Matthews said.

The IEU’s submission argues that better pay and conditions are key to solving the sector’s staffing crisis and improving the quality of services.

“Solving the attraction and retention crisis requires employers to treat early childhood teachers the same as their primary school counterparts, including through pay parity,” Matthews said.

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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