

18 August 2025

URGENT CALL: STAND WITH COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS

We write to ask you to support us in our campaign for increased funding for NSW community preschools.

We represent teachers and directors in NSW community preschools. Our IEU Ambassadors are teachers and directors with decades of service in NSW community-based preschools. We ask you to hear our concerns about a workforce in crisis.

About NSW community preschools

There are around 710 community preschools across NSW, from metropolitan areas to remote and rural areas. Preschools are funded by the NSW Government, not the Commonwealth Government. We provide a vital service to educate and care for children aged three to five years, their families and communities. These are the critical years before children commence primary school. The difference access to safe, high quality early childhood education can make to a child's educational development and wellbeing is transformative.

Community preschools are managed by volunteer parent management committees. Preschools are not-for-profit with a particular focus on being inclusive, catering to all children, including children from backgrounds of economic disadvantage and children with additional needs.

Our preschools provide high quality early education and care. Around 75% of community-based preschools are rated as exceeding in the National Quality Standards (NQS ratings), compared to around 25% of all early childhood education and care services (predominantly long day care services). We are the benchmark for ECEC services.

Workforce in crisis

Community preschools are experiencing a workforce crisis. Preschools have an aging workforce and are not attracting teachers and educators to the sector. Preschools are losing staff to other sectors because they offer better pay and conditions. We know that:

- community preschool teachers and educators receive rates of pay of up to **30% less** than their colleagues with the same qualifications and roles in state government preschools and in school settings
- the NSW Government funds preschools at 50% less per child per year than the Victorian government
- NSW Government funding to provide significant pay increases for teachers in schools and NSW Government preschools has not been matched for community preschools, and
- the Commonwealth Government has funded 15% pay increases for workers in long day care services.

Our workforce is highly feminised (over 90%), where low rates of pay prevail and there is systemic gender undervaluation of the work being performed. If we do not address the workforce crisis in community preschools, we will not be able to continue to provide our vital service to our community.

We need more support from the NSW Government

Funding for community preschools is solely derived from the NSW Government, with limited funding raised by parental fees and fund raising. On average, over 80% of funding received by community preschools is spent on wages. Preschools do not receive any Commonwealth funding.

Since December 2023, the union has been formally briefing the NSW Government on the crisis in our sector. Our union, along with the United Workers Union, filed for a supported bargaining authorisation in the Fair Work Commission, with the support of the Community Early Learning Australia (CELA), who represent not-for-profit community-based preschools. The supported bargaining stream enables us to join the NSW Government as a party to the bargaining and address the systemic concerns with pay and conditions in our sector.

In late July, the NSW Government sought to withdraw from the bargaining process. The NSW Government says that funding will not be increased, and no additional support will be provided to community preschools to address the systemic and growing workforce crisis. They reject any role in assisting in the attainment of fair pay and conditions in the sector, by greater state-wide coordination and financial support.

We seek your support in demanding the NSW Government reconsider its position. We need the NSW Government to work with us to find a way forward for NSW community-based preschools.

We invite you to meet with us and discuss the serious concerns in NSW community-based preschools. We will be available to attend in person when the NSW Parliament is sitting on **11 September 2025**. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet at a time that is convenient to you. Please contact Ms Helen O'Regan at helen@ieu.asn.au to arrange a convenient meeting time.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



CAROL MATTHEWS
Secretary
IEUA NSW/ACT Branch

Our IEU Ambassadors:

Bridget Isichei
Director/Nominated Supervisor
Byron Bay Preschool - Coogera Centre

Janene Rox
Director/Nominated Supervisor
Cronulla Preschool Kindergarten

Jodie Cox
Director/Nominated Supervisor
East Maitland Preschool

Margaret Gleeson
Director/Nominated Supervisor
Keiraville Community Preschool

Melinda Gambley
Director/Nominated Supervisor
Clunes Community Preschool

Raelee Smith
Teacher/Educational Leader
Muswellbrook Preschool