

23 September 2025

CM:112/25

Ms Natasha Gerhardt  
Chief Executive Officer  
Integricare  
**Via email**

Dear Ms Gerhardt

**REQUEST FOR SUPPORT – START STRONG, PAY FAIR DAY OF ACTION  
WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER**

We seek your support for the IEU's Start Strong, Pay Fair campaign, which advocates for increased funding for NSW community preschools.

As you may be aware, we have been seeking a supported bargaining multi-enterprise agreement with 103 community preschools before the Fair Work Commission for the past 12 months.

The supported bargaining process enables us to join the NSW Government, as the funding body for community preschools, in the bargaining before the Fair Work Commission. Evidence shows that, on average, over 80% of funding received by community preschools is allocated to employee wages. Unfortunately, in July 2025, the NSW Government sought to withdraw from the bargaining process and said that funding will not be increased.

**Workforce crisis facing NSW community preschools**

We know that community preschools are experiencing a workforce crisis due to the following factors:

- teachers and educators working in preschools are paid at least 15% less than those working in long day care centres. This is because the Commonwealth Government has funded 15% pay increases for workers in long day care through a successful supported bargaining process last year.
- the NSW Government funds preschools at 50% less per child per year than the Victorian Government, and
- community preschool teachers have the same qualifications and roles as teachers in schools but are paid up to 30% less.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that over 90% of the workforce in community preschools are women, highlighting systemic gender undervaluation. Pay rises of at least 15% for educators are anticipated in 2026 because of the Fair Work Commission determination about gender undervaluation in the *Children's Services Modern Award*. Without additional funding, many preschools may be forced to increase fees, cap enrolments, or maintain long waiting lists - placing further strain on families and communities.

The announcement made by the NSW Government on 16 September 2025 regarding the *Expanding Quality Access* program will not address the core issues facing community preschools.

## **IEU Day of Action**

To raise awareness and put pressure on the NSW Government, the IEU is calling for a Day of Action on Wednesday 15 October. We are encouraging community preschools to close for all or part of the day. This action is supported by Community Early Learning Australia (CELA), the employer representative body.

A rally will also be held to amplify our message:

**When:** Assemble at 11:30 am

**Where:** Top of Martin Place, Sydney CBD

We respectfully request your support in encouraging staff participation in this important campaign. Your endorsement would send a powerful message of solidarity and recognition for the essential work our teachers and educators perform every day.

For those unable to attend the rally in person, there are other meaningful ways to support the campaign, which can be found at: <https://www.ieu.asn.au/start-strong-pay-fair>.

Should you wish to discuss the Day of Action further, please contact Lisa James or Kate Damo at the IEU on 8202 8900.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



**CAROL MATTHEWS**

**Secretary**