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IEU statement on *Four Corners*' exposé of criminals working in the early childhood sector

The union representing teachers in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in NSW and the ACT is shocked by the [ABC *Four Corners*](#) investigation 'Hunting Ground', reporting on paedophiles preying upon young children in Australia's ECEC sector.

"We are deeply disturbed by the revelations in *Four Corners* and share the anger of parents whose children have been harmed by criminals who have infiltrated a sector in crisis because of the failings of some for-profit childcare centres," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"Children should never be the victims of cost-cutting by private equity and other for-profit players to boost profits and shareholder returns."

The IEU stands with our members in calling for the best possible education and care for young children, which lays the vital foundations for their development and lifelong learning. This starts with attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers and educators who are paid fairly.

The *Four Corners* investigation reveals predators are committing crimes in early childhood settings because of lax regulation, inadequate oversight and a lack of trained staff.

"The sector needs reform – the focus on profits rather than high-quality education and care is behind the crimes and serious safety breaches uncovered by *Four Corners*," Matthews said.

"Cost-cutting, high staff turnover and child-to-staff ratios that are routinely gamed are leading to inadequate supervision of young children, which risks their safety."

The union welcomes measures to rebuild confidence in the sector by establishing a strong child safety culture. But the NSW and federal governments must also fix the workforce crisis caused by low pay and excessive workloads that is leading to staff burnout and an exodus from the sector.

The union has repeatedly raised issues that impact the early childhood sector such as ongoing teacher shortages leading to inadequate staffing ratios. Compulsory child safety training for centre operators as well as staff is essential.

"The wellbeing of children should never be sacrificed for the sake of profit," Matthews said.

Contacts

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews 0418 272 902

Media Monica Crouch 0486 046 975 monica@ieu.asn.au

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.

Authorised by Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary