

17 February 2025

Union win: Fair Work Commission backs pay rises for preschool teachers

The union representing teachers in early childhood education and care in NSW and the ACT calls on the NSW government to respect yesterday's Fair Work Commission (FWC) recommendation and boost funding for community preschools to lift the pay and conditions of teachers and educators.

The FWC on 16 February 2026 accepted the union's argument that the state government needs to review and boost the funding for community preschools so they can provide long overdue pay rises.

"The NSW government must accept the umpire's recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

"The NSW government has undervalued their work for far too long. This has caused a workforce crisis that must be fixed by paying salaries comparable with teachers in schools."

- **Beginning preschool teachers:** earn just \$72,497 a year under the applicable modern award, while their colleagues in schools and government preschools are paid more than \$90,000 a year.
- **Experienced preschool teachers:** under the modern award, the top rate for an experienced teacher is \$93,289 per year. In comparison, a teacher with the same level of experience working in a NSW government school or preschool is paid more than \$129,000 a year.

The FWC's recommendation comes four months after more than 1500 teachers, educators and supporters rallied in Martin Place in Sydney as well as in Lismore and Coffs Harbour in support of increased funding for community preschools. The recommendation was handed down by the FWC in the course of proceedings initiated by the IEU – together with the United Workers Union and employer group Community Early Learning Australia – on behalf of over 100 community preschools throughout the state.

Matthews offered special thanks to the union's Preschool Ambassador members who have advocated tirelessly on behalf of their colleagues at the FWC as well as to state MPs and the media.

There are more than 700 community preschools across NSW that provide a vital service to families and communities by educating and caring for children aged 3-to-5. The workforce is predominantly female.

Matthews said funding for community preschools is almost solely derived from the NSW government.

"Without an increase to NSW government funding to lift pay and conditions, many community preschools may be forced to cap enrolments, raise fees for families and, in some cases, close entirely," she said.

Community preschools are run by volunteer committees of parents whose only priorities are children's education and safety – not profit.

"Community preschools have low rates of safety breaches," Matthews said. "And a stable and well-qualified workforce is essential for maintaining a child-safe environment."

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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