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The Thriving Kids Report: a roadmap for better support in ECEC and schools

The [Thriving Kids Advisory Group Report](#), released by the federal government today, makes recommendations aimed at addressing the needs of children and students under nine years of age with developmental delay or autism and low to moderate support needs, outside the NDIS scheme. The initiative is scheduled for roll out on 1 October 2026, with full implementation by 1 January 2028.

IEU members working in ECEC and schools have frequently highlighted the increasing gap between the number of children and students presenting with additional support needs and the capacity for timely intervention provided by allied health and other support professionals.

Too often, teachers, educators and education support staff in early childhood centres and schools have been left to manage the learning, emotional, social, and behavioural needs of these children with inadequate or non-existent support. As well as perpetuating inequities and delaying the achievement of a child's potential, the lack of appropriate support has also presented safety challenges, either to the child or student themselves, their peers, or the teachers, educators, and support staff who work with them.

The IEU emphasised the need for a co-ordinated and targeted approach that improves access to allied health and professional support for children with additional needs during the consultations that informed the report and its recommendations. Such an approach should both simplify and expedite the process for families as well as for those working in education and care settings.

The recommended model for the Thriving Kids Initiative includes the principle of co-design with the ECEC and school sector. In addition, [Recommendation 11](#) states that:

The Committee recommends that a consultative group of professional organisations (including allied health peak bodies, paediatricians, child psychiatrists, child & family nurses, early childhood educators, and school educators) and parents involved in the system themselves, be part of the review process.

Unions should be part of both the co-design and review process, to ensure that there is a platform for members to voice their concerns and provide feedback.

The IEU will continue to advocate for ongoing and meaningful consultation with our members during the development and implementation phases of the Thriving Kids model, to ensure that the design alleviates the workload burden on teachers, educators, and education support staff while achieving the aims of the initiative: better support for children, students and their families.