

12 March 2026

NSW Education Minister needs a plan for community preschools

The union representing teachers in early childhood education and care in NSW and the ACT calls on the NSW government to guarantee the future of community preschools by immediately boosting funding to lift the pay and conditions of teachers and educators in the sector.

NSW Deputy Premier and Education Minister Prue Car on 11 March told a Budget Estimates hearing that the state government would review funding for community preschools as recommended by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

But the Minister also claimed, despite clear evidence presented by the union and accepted by the FWC, that community preschools have the capacity to increase the pay of their staff.

The union disagrees.

“We do not accept that community preschools have sufficient reserves to pay these increases,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. “The NSW government must accept the umpire’s recommendation and immediately fund pay rises that properly value the work of staff in community preschools.”

Matthews said community preschools have already been forced to raise fees for families, despite the funding requirement that parental fees be as low as possible: “There must be a plan to ensure fair pay for community preschool teachers not just in 2026 but in the longer term as well.”

The FWC ordered the NSW government back to the bargaining table with the IEU, United Workers Union and employer group Community Early Learning Australia on 23 March.

The union is planning a rally in Sydney’s CBD on 6 May if the NSW government fails to follow the FWC’s recommendation to fund pay rises for staff in community preschools.

“The NSW government has undervalued the work of community preschool teachers for far too long,” Matthews said. “This has caused a workforce crisis that must be fixed by paying salaries comparable with teachers in schools.”

Funding for community preschools is almost solely derived from the NSW government. The federal government funds other early childhood services, such as long day care, but not preschools.

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.

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

“We welcome the rollout of 100 new NSW government preschools,” Matthews said. “However, the government also needs a plan to ensure the 700 NSW community preschools also have a future.”

Contacts

Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary, 0418 272 902, carol@ieu@asn.au

Media: Andrew Taylor, 0477 902 040, andrew@ieu.asn.au

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