

23 March 2026

MEDIA ALERT

- **When** Monday 23 March 2026 – 8.30am for 8.45am start
- **Where** Outside Fair Work Commission, 80 William Street, East Sydney
- **What** Press conference and photo opportunity
- **Who** Preschool teachers, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews; Community Early Learning Australia CEO Michele Carnegie

Preschool staff and NSW government come face-to-face at Fair Work Commission

The union representing teachers and educators in early childhood education and care in NSW and the ACT is this morning at the Fair Work Commission (FWC) calling on the NSW government to provide better funding for community preschools.

“The umpire has spoken, recommending that the state government review and boost funding for community preschools so they can provide long overdue pay rises to teachers and educators,” said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews.

“Our members are here today to make the point that this issue is felt deeply by the community, despite NSW government attempts to downplay it in Budget Estimates hearings earlier this month.”

There are over 700 community preschools across NSW that provide a vital service to families and communities by educating and caring for children aged 3-to-5.

“There is a long-term staffing crisis in community preschools and this will only worsen without increased funding for much-needed pay rises,” Matthews said.

“Many community preschools face closing. Others have been forced to raise fees for families in a cost-of-living crisis. It’s time the NSW government boosted funding for better pay and conditions.”

More than 90 per cent of preschool staff are women. “We need to fix this gender-based pay undervaluation,” Matthews said.

The union and preschools have been campaigning for two years for pay rises that properly value the work of preschool staff. Yet the NSW government has failed to respond with an offer.

“The union hopes the NSW government will finally come to the table with an offer after NSW Education Minister Prue Car announced a review in Parliament last week,” Matthews said.

A preschool teacher with five years’ experience earns \$86,264, while a graduate teacher in a primary school earns \$90,177.

The FWC recommendation of 16 February was handed down 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.

Funding for community preschools comes from parents and the NSW government – not the federal government. On average, more than 80 per cent of this funding is spent on wages.

Contacts

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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