Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch

Media alert

MEDIA ALERT – PRESCHOOLS PROTEST

- **When Thursday 29 October 2026** – 8.45am for 9am start
- **Where** Outside office of Labor MP Clayton Barr, 118 Vincent Street, Cessnock
- **What** Rally and photo opportunity
- **Who** Preschool teachers, educators and supporters

New funding model means big cuts for community preschools

The union representing teachers and educators in early childhood education and care is deeply concerned that the NSW government's new funding model for not-for-profit community preschools means big cuts that will impact the quality and safety of services and lead to job losses.

The NSW government's Universal Preschool Funding program, released in October, promises millions of dollars in new funding for community preschools.

"But the devil is in the detail," said Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews. "Many preschools anticipate losing hundreds of thousands of dollars under the new program."

This is because funding guidelines are based on complex enrolment requirements, yet preschools have already settled enrolments for 2027. Many are not licensed to enrol more children.

Based on the NSW government's funding estimate tool, IEU members anticipate big cuts: Muswellbrook Preschool will lose $187,000; East Maitland Preschool (Brunswick St) will lose $53,075; East Maitland Preschool (George St) will lose $15,742.

Elsewhere, Byron Bay Preschool estimates it will lose $284,000; Cronulla Preschool will lose $201,000; and Toormina Community Preschool will lose $174,000.

"Yet costs keep rising, and the capacity of many community preschools to deliver safe early childhood education is under threat," Matthews said. "After two years of talks with the NSW government, our members are shocked and angry that their preschools and livelihoods are at risk."

Community preschool teachers are paid less than teachers in schools, government preschools and long day care centres. An experienced teacher in a community preschool could be paid up to $30,000 a year less than a teacher in a government preschool or primary school.

"Any decrease in funding may lead to pay freezes and job losses for teachers and educators amid rising unemployment and a cost-of-living crisis," Matthews said.

"These cuts not only affect staff and families but entire communities – almost 50,000 children are enrolled in about 700 community preschools across NSW. Our hardworking members in preschools are understandably anxious."

IEU members from community preschools are rallying outside NSW MPs' offices in Western Sydney, Cessnock and Lismore to call on the NSW government to fix its funding program.

"The NSW government must act to ensure its new program delivers real funding increases that ensure job security and continuity of high-quality services," Matthews said.

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