



## **INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA**

### **SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT WORKFORCE STUDY**

January 31, 2011

#### **Executive summary**

The IEUA believes that there is a strong case for increasing investment into the quality and availability of early childhood education and care programs, both as an effective approach to supporting children and families and ensuring attraction and retention of qualified teachers.

The IEUA strongly believes that the salaries and conditions of employment for teachers working in early childhood education and care centres must be comparable to the salaries and conditions in other educational settings in order to overcome staff shortages and guarantee quality of education.

It is therefore necessary for State and Federal Governments to make a commitment to significantly increase the amount of funding not only to cover the early childhood education and care centres costs in implementing the National Quality Reforms but also to guarantee that teaching staff receive parity of salaries and conditions with those of their colleagues in schools.

Further the IEUA calls for;

- Government funding to be directly linked to salaries with the intention of achieving parity of salaries with teachers in schools;
- A prescribed allocation of government funding be set aside for ongoing professional development of staff; and
- Increased accountability on services to demonstrate how the funding has been used. In particular, accountability of the expenditure of the funding on staff wages and staff professional development.

#### **1 Introduction**

The IEUA is the federally registered union representing over 65,000 education professionals (teachers and other education staff) in the non-government education sector.

Existing across the early childhood education and care sector are generally two types of governance structures – those early childhood education centres which are corporately owned and run for profit and those ‘not for profit’ preschool, long day care centres, community kindergarten/preschool centres.

Members of the Independent Education Union are employed in the following early childhood education and care settings:

(a) Long day care centres - These centres are open for eight or more hours per day and usually operate 48 to 51 weeks of the year. They cater for children from 0 to 5 years, although some centres do not take children under two years. The centres usually provide full-time and part-time care with a few of the licensed places reserved for emergencies. Centres may be either commercially operated, non-profit or not for profit community based. Parents receive childcare benefit payments at these centres.

(b) Pre-school centres and community kindergartens - These centres cater for children 3 to 5 years (before they go to school) and usually operate on hours and terms similar to schools. In particular, Queensland's community kindergarten centres cater for children from the ages of 3.5 years to 4.5 years, prior to entering Prep school at the age of 4.5 years. Though, where the need arises, Queensland community kindergartens may enrol children from the age of 3 years.

The vast majority of these centres are community based and in receipt of subsidies from the State Government although there are a few private (profit-making) preschools.

(c) Prep Schools in Queensland are early childhood centres attached to schools and are universally available, while not mandatory, to children from the age of 4.5 to 5.5 years. Likewise, while it has not been mandatory for Prep Schools to employ early childhood education specialist trained teachers, the majority of Prep Schools have done so, thus acknowledging the importance of appropriately qualified staff in the delivery of quality early childhood education. Teachers employed in community kindergartens are 4 year university trained early childhood specialist teachers.

(d) Early learning centres are centres attached to independent schools and operate usually within the resources of the primary school. These centres conduct kindergarten programmes and cater for 3 – 4 year olds. Programmes run from two to five days on similar hours to schools, depending on the age of the child. Fees are charged at equivalent rates to school fees.

(e) Other centres such as early intervention centres (providing care for special needs children at early childhood centres or in children's homes) and multipurpose services or "hubs" which provide a variety of services for families on the one premises.

The IEUA is responsible for negotiating many of the awards and collective agreements for members in these various early childhood education and care settings. The processes and outcomes of these negotiations as well as the experiences of our members have strongly formed the basis for our views regarding this sector.

In responding to the Commission's inquiry, the IEUA has drawn upon the experiences of IEUA members in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria as qualified practitioners in the delivery of early childhood education and care.

The IEUA has made several submissions to the current Federal Government's agenda regarding early childhood education and care. These include:

- Submission to Productivity Agenda Working Group, Education, Skills, Training and Early Childhood Development – A National Quality Framework For Early Childhood Education and Care. (September 2008);
- Submission to Productivity Agenda Working Group, Education, Skills, Training and Early Childhood Development – Early Years Learning Framework. (December 2008);
- Submission to Early Childhood Development Steering Committee on Regulation Impact Statement for Early Childhood Education and Care Quality Reforms (August 2009);
- Submission to Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee: Inquiry into Provision of Childcare (January 2009).

*Given the terms of reference, is the suggested scope of the ECD workforce appropriate for the purposes of this study?*

## **2 Scope of the Inquiry**

The IEUA recognizes the scope of the inquiry is to focus on early childhood in the year before formal schooling but not the later years. This includes preschools in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and the ACT, and kindergartens in Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania

**The IEUA notes the term “early childhood education and care” as the term adopted by the OECD to appropriately emphasise the inseparable nature of care and education of young children and thus we have deliberately utilised this reference throughout the submission.**

## **The Early Childhood Development Workforce**

*What characteristics describe the childcare and preschool workforces in terms of demographics, wages and salaries, working conditions, employment status, staff turnover, unfilled vacancies and job satisfaction?*

## **3 Composition of the Sector**

Historically, early childhood education and care has been divided into two largely separate systems. Child “care” delivered in child care centres and home based centres and early “education” delivered in preschools and kindergartens.

From that division, arose different levels and types of staffing in childcare and preschool and kindergartens. Most preschools and kindergartens have had qualified early childhood teachers while only about 8% of staff in child care centres have an early childhood degree level qualification.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot, A (2004) pg 9

Teachers within community kindergartens/preschools must be specialized, tertiary early childhood education trained teachers and in Queensland are registered under the Queensland College of Teachers. It is essential to note that the delivery of an educational programme is the *raison d'être* of community kindergartens and pre schools. The majority of teachers possess a four year degree qualification in early childhood. The degree qualification focuses on the learning and needs of children in this particular stage of development.

In NSW, while all early childhood services (both care settings and education settings) have always had the same regulatory requirements for qualified teacher ratios, a disproportionate number of interim approvals is granted to the “for profit” long day care sector allowing them to employ a TAFE trained childcare worker instead of a qualified teacher for up to 12 months.

**The IEUA recognizes that both these sectors are now experiencing a shift in philosophy as changes in federal government policy are now driving the sectors towards a combined early childhood education and care focus.**

**The IEUA supports the dedicated focus to early childhood education and regulation which prescribes for the employment of 4 year trained early childhood teachers as we strongly believe an educational programme can only be provided by an early childhood teacher specialist. This is consistent with the Federal Government’s policy position on early childhood education and care.**

#### **4 Governance structures of the sector**

In analysing the demographics and conditions of the sector, it is appropriate to consider the governance structures of the various services.

Existing across the early childhood sector are generally two types of governance structures – those early childhood centres which are corporately owned and those “not for profit” community crèche and kindergarten/preschool centres.

There are differences in the focus of these two governance structures. The profitability of services can often be in conflict with those conditions that have been linked to positive outcomes for children, including high staff-child ratios, quality regulation and qualified staff. The highest cost in childrens’ services is the cost of labour.

In the experience of the IEUA, the ‘for profit’ sector has a higher proportion of casualisation of staff, part time staff working irregular hours, the reduction of staff hours, the reduction of adult to child ratios. These are prime examples of the reduction of costs in the pursuit of profit viability.

In regard to “not for profit” services, IEUA members report that the focus is more fundamentally on the children and outcomes.

**The IEUA considers the introduction of the National Quality Reforms for early childhood education and care as a positive mechanism to ensuring consistency in the employment of qualified early childhood teachers and staff in all preschool/kindergartens and long day care centres in both the ‘for profit’ and ‘not for profit’ systems.**

#### **Supply of ECD Workers**

##### **Staff Retention and Turnover**

*To what extent are ECEC services experiencing staff retention issues? Are there examples of effective staff retention strategies in the ECD sector?*

#### **4 Staff Retention and Turnover**

According to the results of the National Children’s Services Workforce Project 2006,<sup>2</sup> there is an estimated 100 000 people working in early childhood education and care, with 67 % working in metropolitan areas and 33 % in rural areas.

The average age of the workforce has been cited as 35 years. However, long day care had a younger age profile with the highest proportion of staff in 20 – 29 age cohorts. Preschool/kindergarten had older age profiles with the highest proportions of staff in the 40 – 49 cohorts.<sup>3</sup>

The early childhood workforce is predominantly female. Men represent 55% of the total labour force, but only 3 % of early childhood educators.<sup>4</sup>

These figures are also reflected in the IEUA membership for the sector.

The sector has a high turnover rate. Nationally, 32 % of early childhood educators leave their positions, with the turnover being higher at 37% for unqualified workers and lower at 25% for preschool/kindergarten teachers.<sup>5</sup>

In the 2005, 32 % of staff leaving did so for a new career, 22 % left for family or personal reasons and 19 % took extended leave.<sup>6</sup>

Turnover rates are higher for unqualified staff. The average length of service for staff working in children’s services is 7.3 years. Staff working in Director or Co-coordinator or Teacher in Charge positions averaged 11 years in the sector, followed by group leaders or teachers with seven years and assistants and teacher aids with five and half years.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council, Workforce Project 2006 pg2

<sup>3</sup> National Children’s Services workforce study 2004

<sup>4</sup> National Children’s Services workforce study 2004

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> ibid

The IEUA membership records support the general findings of the study, particularly in long day care centres in NSW where high staff turnover is experienced. The staffing is composed mostly of female graduates who are paid less than their colleagues in schools, employed on casual employment arrangements and are provided with limited or no career development.

However, IEUA membership in Queensland demonstrates that turnover in preschools and community kindergartens in Queensland is considerably more stable due to the more comparable rate of pay to early childhood teachers employed in schools( referred to Schedule 2.)

The Workforce Study showed that in 2004, 38 % of staff entering the sector were unqualified while 25% were graduates. In addition, the study reported that 13% of positions advertised, remained unfilled or vacant. The survey results indicated that staff holding exemptions, generally on the condition that they are undertaking study, filled nearly 3 000 positions for qualified staff across Australia.<sup>8</sup>

The IEUA membership reflects a disproportionate level of graduates in positions of responsibilities such as Director in Long Day Care Centres, compared to that in schools and community kindergarten/preschools and that more qualified staff exemptions were granted to the ‘for profit’ sector than the “not for profit” sector.

High staff turnover is a key indicator of a workforce trapped in a cycle of low skill and low pay. Strategies which address these factors, go to addressing staff turnover. Such strategies are:

- Payment of salaries commensurate with teacher rates of pay in schools;
- Employer supported professional development and skill development;
- Continuing employment; and
- Higher staff: child ratios than regulated.

#### **Future demand for ECD workers**

*What options are available for funding the increased wages and salaries of more qualified ECD workers*

### **5 Funding of the Sector**

Issues concerning the quality of education and care for young children and the availability of workforce are inseparable from the way in which services are funded.

Government funding for early childhood services can occur in several ways. The Federal Government funding provides direct subsidies to parents and further funding to States through the National Partnerships.

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<sup>8 8</sup> Community Services Ministers’ Advisory Council, Workforce Project 2006 pg3

State Government funding may be through operational recurrent or capital funding, the direct delivery of services, funding to parents or funding tied to specific purposes such for children with special needs.

In NSW there is a mixed system of early childhood education and care services with 750 community-based preschools, 100 preschools which are attached to primary schools and administered by the Department of Education and Training, and approximately 1500 long day care services. All are regulated by the Department of Human Services.

This department provides some recurrent funding to the community based preschools and a very small subsidy, less than \$14 000, to community based long day care centres.

In NSW, before school age children are provided early childhood education and care under the auspice of the Department of Education and Training, (DET) Independent schools, community based not-for –profit providers (including local councils) and for-profit operators.

DET preschools, and preschools operated by Independent schools, pay their teachers at the same rate as teachers employed in their schools. Community- based preschools and long day care centres cannot afford to do this, which in turn, creates the teacher wage disparity.

Because of the consequent loss of pay parity, early childhood education and care services in NSW have increasing problems with retention and attraction of early childhood teachers.

Funding to NSW community preschools had effectively been frozen for some years. However, in 2010 the funding formula was increased provided that the increase in funding was used to assist in the reduction of fees to parents.

From July 2011, the NSW State Government in accordance with the Bilateral Agreement, will introduce a *Teacher Costs Contributing Scheme* . Under this scheme, all services will receive \$6000 to \$8000 per annum for each transfer to help offset the costs of employment. This program will be reviewed as to its costs and effectiveness in 2012.

While the introduction of this scheme is welcomed, there are very few checks and balances in place to ensure that the monies will be used to offset salaries and staff training. The scheme is available to both community based and “for profit” services.

**The IEUA considers these amounts to be insufficient when considering the need to deliver National Quality Reforms and provide for wage parity.**

At least a doubling in funding under the Teacher Cost Contribution Scheme for the community based “not for profit” sector (preschool and long day care centres) must be considered . \$12 000 for a 3 year trained teacher and \$16 000 for each 4 year trained

teacher employed provided it was directed to payment of wages, would start to address wage pay parity with early childhood teachers in schools.

In Queensland, the situation is different as both recurrent funding and capital assistance to community kindergartens has been directly available through the Department of Education for over a decade.

However, in October 2009, a new funding scheme, the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (KFS) was introduced for a range of services that provide kindergarten programs. These services include community kindergartens, kindergartens operated by non-state schools and long day care services that provide an approved kindergarten program. Thus all services approved to provide a kindergarten program are to be funded under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme.

The key feature of this scheme is that approved kindergarten program providers will receive a standard subsidy per eligible child enrolled. Further subsidies are available for services in remote and lower socioeconomic areas.

From July 2010, the standard subsidy available to long day care services for each child participating in a kindergarten program is \$1239 per year. The standard subsidy available to kindergarten services is \$2168.24 per year. The reason for the difference between the two rates is that families with children attending long day care services can access Australian Government childcare benefits and rebates that reduce the out of pocket fees for eligible parents.

The Kindergarten Funding Scheme is not directly linked to staff costs and has no direct indexation to State teacher wage movement.

This scheme has replaced the long standing Department of Education and Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme ( DECKAS) which provided funding linked to approximately 80 % of approved staff costs of a teacher/director and an assistant employed for each community kindergarten unit. Funding was based on the following

- The appropriate award/collective agreement salaries of the teacher /director of each kindergarten unit, comparable to those received in the State sector;
- The appropriate award/collective agreement salaries for an assistant;
- Other staff costs payable under the collective agreement including;
  - Compulsory occupational superannuation;
  - District and locality allowance;
  - Holiday leave loading of 17.5% on 4 weeks; and
  - Voluntary superannuation payment from 1 October 2006 as prescribed by the collective agreement.

Significantly, this DECKAS funding formula secured funding for qualified early childhood education teachers. Kindergarten committees were able to select a teacher on the basis of quality and experience, not cost. Any increases to state sector teacher wages were reflected in increases to DECKAS funding.



**IEUA considers the Kindergarten Funding Scheme to be an inferior funding model compared to the previous formula used in DECKAS.**

**The IEUA holds serious concerns for the viability of the community kindergarten sector, especially in light of increased costs associated with the introduction of the Federal Quality Reforms and Universal Access.**

The changes to the levels of funding for community kindergartens in Queensland leave a significant shortfall for centres and parents to cover. The current average costs to parents for a child in a community kindergarten centre in Queensland is \$25. This amount, compared to the costs to parents in NSW of \$40 per child, is due to the previous existence of the superior DECKAS funding mechanism in Queensland.

Queensland's recent changes to funding scheme, coupled with the impact of the additional financial pressures on community kindergartens to manage the Universal Access of 15 hours per week within the current hours of duty arrangements will push centres to the limit of their ability to operate.

Centres are expecting a shortfall of an estimated \$400 per child per annum where additional subsidies to the Kindergarten Funding Scheme are not received.

**IEUA has serious concerns that the introduction of the deficient Kindergarten Funding Scheme will result in wage/salary pressures and furthering of wage inequity across the sectors.**

In contrast to NSW and QLD, local government in Victoria is a key player in the childcare sector. Local government may either be responsible as licensee or may own the property from which the service operates. In addition, it is also a key provider of kindergarten programs with 92% of councils owning infrastructure from which programs operate.

It is noted that the Victorian Government contributes funding for capital works for children services determined by the government and that new centres have been identified by the government to be built over the next few years.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, new salary arrangements have been developed to ensure wage parity for early childhood education teachers across the sector.

Funding of early childhood education and care in Australia has been historically at lower levels compared to other OECD nations<sup>10</sup>. While the COAG reforms will increase the proportion of funding to the respective States and Territories, a significant commitment to increase funding toward early childhood education and care is still necessary from the Federal Government.

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<sup>9</sup> Childcare Taskforce, October 2006, Victorian Government

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF Report Card 8, (2008) p 20

*Why are EDC workers paid less than those working in related sectors? Are the wages and salaries for workers in different ECD occupations appropriate, given the skills and qualifications required?*

*Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded? Is expertise sufficiently recognised and valued? How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced.*

*How much of the shortage is caused by low wages or wage differentials?*

## **6 Inequity in Teaching Salaries Across the Sector.**

Without structural change to wages, salaries and conditions, attracting and retaining qualified early childhood teachers will remain an ongoing challenge for the sector

Significant discrepancies between wages and the conditions of qualified early childhood teachers working in early childhood education and care and those working in schools are experienced.

Schedule 1 attached provides details of salaries for NSW preschool teachers across the sector. Up to 20% difference in pay is experienced by those working in childcare centres compared to those working in schools.

Qualified teacher directors of some large services (60- 90 children) earn \$30 000 per annum less than principals of small schools in New South Wales.

The current government funding arrangements in NSW are the primary cause of these long term pay inequities for teachers in early childhood education centres.

It must be emphasized that the development of the Education Services (Teacher) Modern Award for the sector has not assisted in moving salaries for early childhood education teachers and childcare workers. The wages prescribed by the Modern Award are considerably less than that paid to teachers in schools. The comparison in wage outcomes is outlined in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2. The IEUA estimates that under 1% of non government schools are affected by the Modern Award as the vast majority of non government schools have enterprise agreements for salaries similar or above those paid to teachers in state schools.

The Modern Award should not be considered as the benchmark for wages and salaries, if the Government is serious about addressing workforce issues.

Pay inequity is the one of the major contributing factors to the labour shortage in the early childhood education and care sector. Staff will not enter into, or remain in, services where they are undervalued and underpaid compared to other services.

Schedule 2 demonstrates the positive impact when government funding covers salary costs. Schedule 2 outlines salaries provided to classroom teachers in Queensland State,

those working in Non-Government schools and makes comparisons to those paid to community kindergarten teachers. Wage relativities have been maintained by the previous DECKAS funding arrangements.

However, the replacement of DECKAS with Kindergarten Funding Scheme, may make wage parities for early childhood teachers in community kindergartens more difficult to achieve.

*Are there other factors ( such as working hours or conditions) that are important in attracting staff to the sector?*

*Are workers who obtain additional skills and qualifications sufficiently rewarded?  
Is expertise sufficiently recognised and valued? How could opportunities for career progression within the ECD sector be enhanced.*

## **7 Impact of Lack of Career Path on the Attraction and Retention of Qualified Staff.**

Other working conditions also have a significant impact on attraction and retention. Lack of access to paid maternity leave , continuity of employment, professional development and career advancement are factors which diminish the attractiveness of the early childhood education centres.

In regard to career advancement, Schedule 2 outlines the extent of the lack of career path or recognition for experience within community kindergarten in Queensland. An early childhood teacher working in a Catholic school is able to access an experienced teacher classification rate of pay of \$ \$83 822. This is not available to those similarly qualified and experienced early childhood teachers in Queensland community kindergartens.

The issue is similar elsewhere. The lack of career path or access to senior teacher/accomplish teacher or other higher levels of classification fails to support and recognize teachers with experience and highly developed pedagogical skills.

When analyzing the early childhood education and care sector, it must be noted that there is no true labour market. Staff shortages do not result in a market demand for improved wages and conditions. Services do not have the funding to increase wages so market cannot achieve balance. The only solution to poor wages and conditions is direct government subsidy of teachers wages or general funding increases.

**The IEUA believes that there is a strong case for increasing investment into the quality and availability of early childhood education and care programs, both as an effective approach to supporting children and families and ensuring attraction and retention of qualified teachers.**

**The IEUA strongly believes that the salaries and conditions of employment for teachers working in early childhood education and care centres must be comparable**

**to the salaries and conditions in other educational settings in order to overcome staff shortages and guarantee quality of education.**

**It is therefore necessary for State and Federal Governments to make a commitment to significantly increase the amount of funding not only to cover the early childhood education and care centres costs in implementing National Quality Reforms but also to guarantee that teaching staff receive parity of salaries and conditions with those of their colleagues in schools.**

**Further the IEUA calls for;**

- **Government funding to be directly linked to salaries with the intention of achieving parity of salaries with teachers in schools;**
- **A prescribed allocation of government funding to be set aside for ongoing professional development of staff; and**
- **Increased accountability by services to demonstrate how the subsidy has been used, in particular, the link between subsidy and staff wages and professional development.**

## **8 Impact of Workload**

The lack of access to paid preparation time is a further contributing factor to high staff turnover and burn out.

The duties undertaken by an early childhood teacher are wide ranging; yet, little or no programming or administration time is provided.

The role and duties of a teacher in developing, implementing and monitoring early childhood education programs is complex. Teachers write very detailed developmental summaries, which include definite long-term goals for each child. These are then broken down into short-term goals and form the basis of the play based curriculum. A new early childhood curriculum is currently being implemented across Australia; the Early Years Learning Framework. This requires complex observation and analysis of each child's development to ensure that the early childhood education that the child receives will result in improved outcomes for the child.

Teachers record and analyse detailed observations of all children in order to assist them to determine how each child is developing and learning. The tasks each child performs are broken down into their component skills in order to assist the child to progress to the next logical step in their development.

A variety of activities and resources, appropriate to the child's current understanding and interests, are selected in order to challenge the child's thinking and skill level.

Children progress through these skills in differing periods of time depending upon development and past experience. In addition, young children arrive at centres with differing abilities.

Early childhood teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their program according to how effective and motivating experiences were in assisting the child to acquire new skills.

Warrilow et al. (2004) found reasons for the shortage of staff include *“a lack of ongoing education opportunities, poor working conditions, a lack of professional support, limited opportunity for career progression and the low status of the profession in society. The situation is exacerbated by the fragmentation of the sector, funding restrictions and a mismatch between pre-service training and job expectations, the level of administrative work required and workplace stress and burnout”* (cited in Fisher & Patulny, 2004, p. 7).

Every year, workers in the sector, especially teachers, face increasing levels of responsibilities, increasing complexity of regulation, and increase compliance issues and workload demands. This is in contrast to the low and static wages and low status of employees. Whilst workload and work demands increase and there is no commensurate increase in pay and status, workforce demands will always outstrip workforce supply.

This is why increase government funding of wages and conditions in the sector is an imperative. The incidences of workplace stress in the profession needs to be addressed.

The majority of early childhood teachers questioned by the IEUA NSW Branch report working between 4 and 20 hours per week (unpaid) on programming, evaluating, planning, acquiring resources, researching, completing paperwork including observations and developmental records. This is equally experienced in long day care centres as well as kindergarten and preschools settings.

Few industrial agreements provide for non contact time or programming time. For example, the Teachers (Education Services (Teacher) Modern Award only provides for non contact time for teachers employed in long day care. This is in marked contrast to industrial instruments for teachers in school which usually provide up to 2 hours per week. In other cases, Teachers and Directors must negotiate time away from the children to perform programming on a case by case basis or complete the tasks after hours in unpaid time.

Additionally, some teaching directors are not given any administration time by their employers during the week. This means they must attend to many tasks outside of working hours including returning telephone calls, enrolments, completing licensing documentation, staff management, policy development, and OH&S checklists. Many early childhood teachers employed in child care centres do not have the opportunity to set up their classrooms prior to children arriving at the centre.

The IEUA is aware of a number of centres in NSW where staff are expected to set up the indoor and outdoor environments for up to 40 minutes (without pay) before their eight to ten hour shift commences for the day.

This occurs because children arrive at the centre at opening time and some children do not leave the centre until closing time. Staff cannot maintain their duty of care in

supervising and interacting with children whilst preparing activities and equipment and must perform these duties outside their normal working hours. This is unpaid work.

In Queensland, the previously existing Early Childhood Education Award 2003 ( which applied only to community kindergartens) provided that teachers delivered an educational programme for a maximum of 27.5 hours per week, and that teachers had an additional 10 hours per week for duties other than teaching. This at least represented an attempt to partially reflect the reality of the hours invested by teachers. Unfortunately, this provision was removed by the Modern Award.

*(i) Impact of Universal Access.*

Problems have arisen with the introduction of the Universal Access reform, a Federal Government election initiative. The initiative sets out to provide all children with access to a quality early childhood education program by 2013. These programs will be delivered by a university trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling

IEUA has long believed that quality early childhood education is provided through tertiary qualified and registered teachers' supported by qualified early childhood teacher assistants and childcare workers. Thus, in principle, the delivery of early childhood education program by a qualified early childhood teacher is commendable.

However, there are serious concerns with regard to the implementation of this reform which, if not addressed, will lead to work load and funding issues.

IEUA NSW/ACT members have identified that the 15 hours does not fit with NSW preschool patterns of enrollments where children attend 6 hours per day 2 or 3 days per week. In Queensland, implementation problems are further exemplified. All teachers in community kindergartens are currently covered by collective agreement which provides for "no more than 27.5 hours of teaching of an educational programme per week". Once again, 15 hours does not easily fit into 27.5 hours.

These problems have come about due to insufficient consultation prior to the release of the Universal Access initiative by the Federal Government.

In both situations, the issues surrounding the implementation of the Universal Access program if not addressed sufficiently, could result in increased work load for teachers or additional staffing costs for centres.

*(ii) Ancillary duties*

In addition to teaching, preparation and administration, is the maintenance of the centres. Some centres do not hire cleaners. This leads to the unacceptable situation where teachers and assistants are expected to complete all cleaning duties including cleaning toilets and sinks, mopping floors, sweeping, cleaning out lockers in addition to their normal duties. Due to the supervisory nature and associated duty of care responsibilities of the early childhood education and care, many of these tasks must be performed prior to and after

finishing their shifts for the day, thus remains unpaid work. The IEUA is active in overturning these practices.

*How might the proposed qualification standards, staffing levels and the implied mix of skills and knowledge assist the delivery of the desired outcomes for children?  
What impact will the new standards and targets have on demand for ECD workers.*

## **9 The Importance of Qualified Early Childhood Teachers for the Sector.**

**The IEUA believes that quality early childhood education is provided only through tertiary qualified and registered early childhood teachers supported by early childhood teacher assistants/childcare workers.**

Researchers have defined the characteristics of the most effective early childhood settings as containing detailed and focused planning, strong leadership and management skills, adult-child interactions that supported children's thinking and at least one university-trained early childhood teacher supporting and working with less qualified staff (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart & Elliot, 2003).

Teachers with specialised early education qualifications possess significantly greater knowledge and skills in relation to early childhood learning theories and models than employees with other qualifications.

It is well recognized that the new National Quality Reforms will increase the demand for early childhood teachers nationally, especially 4 year trained early childhood teachers.

The various Bilateral Agreements made between the Federal Government and State/Territory Governments outline the proposed targets for 4year university trained teachers with early childhood education specialization. In particular, NSW Government has proposed moving the base line of teachers from 4680 to 5 600 by 2013, while Queensland will need to more than double the existing numbers from 600 to 1570 in 2013.<sup>1112</sup>

## **10 Role of the Teacher Assistant/Childcare Worker**

The role of the teacher assistant/childcare worker in providing quality early childhood educational support should not be overlooked. Teacher assistants/childcare workers provide the essential support to the teacher and the children during the various activities in a play based program which caters for the individual child's needs, interests and abilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Bilateral Agreement on Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, NSW..

<sup>12</sup> Bilateral Agreement on Achieving Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, Queensland. Numbers represent head count.

A significant number of teacher assistants/childcare workers have achieved at least Certificate III qualifications in child care so that they may more appropriately assist the teacher in the educational programs being implemented. Upgrading of qualifications is now requirement of the National Quality Reforms.

Financial support and development of appropriate RPL for teachers assistants is necessary to reach the implementation targets of the National Quality Reforms.

The IEUA acknowledges the Federal Government's initiatives such as the allocation of \$53.9 million to increase university places for Early Childhood Teachers and \$12.4 million to reduce HELP debts for teachers who work in regional and high disadvantage areas are important measures to address the shortage of qualified staff.

However, more needs to be done. The life circumstances of people working in the early education and care sector may act as a barrier to the successful completion of studies. Majority of workers are women with family responsibilities and this adds extra burden to their work and their study. The cost of study is also an additional barrier to undertaking studies.

**The IEUA recognizes the existence of 3 year university qualified early childhood teachers currently employed within some centres.**

**The IEUA recommends support such as the removal of HECS so that these teachers may upgrade their qualifications as required. Further, calls for appropriate bridging courses to be developed by tertiary institutions based on consistent educational outcomes.**

**The IEUA also recommends that an appropriate and consistent method of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) criteria be developed to assist those teachers and staff to upgrade their qualifications. Significant to the development of RPL criteria is the involvement of the various state/territory teacher registration boards to oversee a more consistent development of early childhood teacher education courses.**

**Further, the IEUA calls for Government sponsored leave so that early childhood workers can access courses, in particular the teaching practicum requirements of University early childhood education courses, without financial burden.**



### **Qualifications and Career Pathways**

*Are in-service training and professional development programs meeting workforce development needs? Are there barriers in ECD staff accessing training and development programs*

## **11. Professional Development**

Ongoing professional development and professional support of teachers and staff is an essential element to ensuring quality early childhood education. Variations exist in the amount of professional development provided to staff in early childhood education and care centres. In some locations, preschool teachers and their assistants are able to access five days of approved planning time and staff development including extra days in designated periods during working hours. In other settings, professional development is only available in out of work hours and at the employee's expense.

Where staff are supported by regular good quality professional development and coupled with a professional support which could be delivered by early childhood advisors visiting the service, staff can keep up to date with policy and professional development issues; then quality is improved and assured.

**The IEUA believes that an increase in the investment in the support of teachers and their professional development is an essential criteria for the determination of quality early childhood education.**

Early childhood teachers are often isolated and lack access to feedback from more experienced teachers. Most centres employ between one and two early childhood teachers. This is particularly so for those services in remote and rural areas, where professional development and professional discourse is rarely experienced.

**The IEUA recommends the development of a support system which includes telephone advice, face-to-face mentoring and networking opportunities which will greatly assist in removing the sense of isolation which early childhood teachers experience.**

## **ECD Workforce for Indigenous Children**

*What strategies are needed to build indigenous workforce capacity*

### **12. Support for indigenous communities**

**The IEUA welcomes the federal government's funding focus on Indigenous early childhood education and stresses that emphasis must be placed on ensuring that qualified early childhood teachers are available to every child.**

Currently small preschools and kindergarten classes in the Northern Territory are conducted by teacher assistants/childcare workers or by teachers without formal early childhood education qualifications.

While bilingual experience and the recognition of children's culture, strength and knowledge provide an important experience, children also need access to planned play based educational programs conducted by qualified early childhood teachers.

Staff living in indigenous communities and in regional and remote areas experience disadvantage due to the high costs associated with travel and accommodation required in order to attend formal training institutions.

This must be overcome if equity of quality early childhood education is to be delivered.

**The IEUA recommends the implementation of the following**

- **Scholarships for Indigenous, remote and rural communities covering tuition fees, travel and accommodation expenses;**
- **Strong support networks established in order to encourage Indigenous child care workers to enter the field and to upgrade their qualifications;**
- **Ongoing, culturally inclusive professional development;**
- **The development of preservice courses and ongoing professional development courses with culturally inclusive curricula; and**
- **Courses and mentoring support systems designed to assist Indigenous students to develop literacy skills that enable them to cope with study at TAFE and university.**

The IEUA recognises the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in which offers distance education in childcare training in a number of remote communities. It also provides community support to remote centres. The demand for this training and support reflects the growth of, and interests in early childhood education in both Indigenous and remote communities.

### **Professional Status of the EDC workforce**

*Do you consider the professional status to be an issue for the ECD workforce? What factors determine the professional status in the sector? How might a change in the status be achieved?*

### **13. Professional Status of Early Childhood Education**

Despite recent Commonwealth intervention in workforce issues, including the payment of 50% of HELP fees for early childhood teachers who work in rural and remote areas, the removal of TAFE fees for Child care studies courses and the creation of 1500 additional university places, there has been little impact on the major issues of early childhood education and care workforce status and standing within the community.

Attraction of school leavers and other new workforce entrants and retention of existing workers is difficult when staff employed in children's services are underpaid, undervalued and have less tolerable conditions than other sectors.

**IEUA members are concerned that the public perception is that early childhood education is not of the same standing as other educational programs.**

Members have informed their union that they often feel compelled to justify their choice to teach in early childhood.

The IEUA believes that early childhood teachers desperately want families and wider society to recognize the value of what they do. This lack of recognition of their professional status is a contributing factor to early childhood teachers leaving the profession.

**The IEUA believes that this could partly be addressed by ensuring:**

- **That all state teacher registration bodies equally recognise early childhood education;**
- **That teachers are remunerated commensurate with teachers in schools;**
- **Staff are offered continuing employment;**
- **Paid preparation and administration time is provided to assist staff to plan and assess and undertake administration duties;**
- **Access to employer provided professional development; and**
- **Development of appropriate career structures and associate salary scales to recognize experience and positions of responsibilities.**

The IEUA further recognizes the value of research which suggests that a centralized management, training and support system that allows for early childhood teachers to train as centre directors while also providing for the ability to transfer between services. Such a system would not only ensure exchange of expertise between services but should also provide portability of entitlements.

## **Productivity of the ECD workforce**

*What is the scope for productivity improvements in the ECD sector?*

### **14. Productivity issues**

The issues paper questions the potential for productivity measures in the sector. In particular the issue paper states “*In theory, increased costs could be partially offset by increases in productivity. However, the potential for productivity gains is limited by mandatory staff to child ratios. Indeed, future increases in these ratios are likely to have a negative impact on productivity.*”

**The IEUA strongly opposes the focus of productivity offsets in the early childhood education sector and does not believe that productivity gains can occur without the loss of quality of care provide to children within services.**

A competitive economic climate driven by market forces has proven to be detrimental to early childhood education and care because the important concerns including quality, the purpose of quality early childhood education and the working conditions of staff are virtually ignored in any comparison with affordability and the number of places available.

Educational research confirms the lasting importance of quality early childhood experiences to children’s later development and success. An analysis of the rates of return to human capital from investing across all age-groups by Edwards, Gandini and Forman ( 1994) indicates that the benefits of high quality early childhood programs for the broader community are cumulative. That is, earlier high levels of investment in early childhood services are associated with greater levels of social and economic gains in later life.

Early childhood education and care must therefore be evaluated for its contribution to the broader economic and social benefits to society. Narrow perspectives restrict our understanding of the significance of early childhood education and care.

## SCHEDULE 1

### WAGE COMPARISON FOR 4 YEAR TRAINED TEACHERS IN NSW – FEBRUARY 2011

	<b>Non Government Preschools (State)</b>	<b>Long Day Care (State)</b>	<b>Catholic Preschools</b>	<b>DET Preschools and DET and Catholic Primary Schools</b>	<b>Independent Schools Preschools and Primary Schools</b>	<b>Modern Award</b>
Year 1	\$45,.704	\$47,532	\$48,479	\$56,829	\$59,984	\$41,558
Year 2	\$48,538	\$50,477	\$51,481	\$59,752	\$63,077	\$43,058
Year 3	\$51,226	\$53,316	\$54,380	\$62,684	\$66,165	\$44,558
Year 4	\$54,293	\$56,464	\$57,592	\$65,614	\$69,259	\$45,954
Year 5	\$57,105	\$59,390	\$60,577	\$68,540	\$72,345	\$47,350
Year 6	\$59,498	\$61,878	\$63,113	\$71,469	\$75,437	\$48,850
Year 7	\$61,874	\$64,352	\$65,632	\$74,394	\$78,530	\$50,350
Year 8	\$64,557	\$67,139	\$68,480	\$77,327	\$81,624	\$51,850
Year 9	\$67,140	\$69,825	\$71,217	\$84,759	\$84,714	\$53,350
Year10	\$67,140	\$69,825	\$71,217	\$84,759	\$84,714	\$54,850

## SCHEDULE 2

### QUEENSLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER WAGE COMPARISON

	1 July 2011 C&K Early Childhood Education	1 July 2011 Catholic Schools	1 July 2011 Education Queensland	1 July 2010 # Modern Award
Band 2				
Step 1	56585	56901	56900	41558
Step 2	58418	58252	58252	43058
Step 3	61473	61299	61299	44558
Step 4	64541	64354	64354	45954
Step 5	67620	67425	67425	47350
Band 3				
Step 1	70184	69982	69982	48850
Step 2	72758	72549	72549	50350
Step 3	76313	75103	75103	51850
Step 4	78035	77806	77806	53350
Senior Teacher/ Experienced Teacher 5	81601	81375	81372	54850
Experienced Teacher 6		83822		

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