

BEDROCK

issue 2 | Vol 28 | 2023



Provocations and Pintya Kuu

A look inside Flinders University's early childhood education program

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle*. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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TERMINOLOGY

The union acknowledges regional
differences in some terms. Please
bear these in mind as you read:

QNT – Kindergarten

NSW/ACT –

Preschool/Early childhood centre



Dangerous trend towards directed play 18

Australia should not copy UK

Upfront	4	Our voice heard on Early Years Strategy	16
News from your sector		Union members' voices heard through further consultation	
The minister will not be happy	6	Datafication and 'schoolification'	20
Who's going tell the new NSW Government about the crisis?		Data collection creeping into UK early childhood education	
Setting children up for life	8	Rural and remote teachers – don't go it alone, join your union	21
How can we optimise the first 10,000 hours of a child's life?		The IEU is here to help	
Vote 'yes' for a Voice	11	Your questions	22
The upcoming referendum is an opportunity to recognise First Nations people		Industrial advice: You ask, our organisers answer	
Provocations and Pintya Kuu	12	Giveaways	23
A look inside Flinders University's early childhood education program		Go into the draw to win a free book	
Watching her children grow	15		
Lisa Thurnburrow reflects on 40 years in the sector			

Editorial

Plenty is happening in terms of change and progress in the early childhood education and care sector following the election of a new federal government in May last year.

Our federal union has been participating in the different stages of consultation for the development of a Commonwealth Early Years Strategy, designed to be a “roadmap that sets out a shared understanding of what children and families in Australia need in the early years”.

Read about what IEU representatives who attended one of the key events, the Early Years Summit, shared with policymakers and other stakeholders about our members’ experiences in ECEC centres across the country and the practical reforms the sector needs (story on p16).

We catch up with long-term IEU member Lisa Thornburrow, who reflects on her career and the changes she’s experienced working as an early childhood education teacher over the past 40 years (p15).

Professor Karen Thorpe from the Queensland Brain Institute speaks to us about her upcoming large-scale longitudinal research project, which will track 600 children from infancy and throughout their ECEC journey to examine what constitutes quality early years education (p8).

We explore the barriers faced by teachers working in rural and remote settings, a cohort who can often feel isolated, and the importance of IEU membership to improving working conditions and fostering a sense of belonging and community (p21).

Australians will head to the polls to vote in a referendum later this year.

Learn why the union movement is supporting a YES vote for a First Nations Voice to Parliament as a crucial next step towards reconciliation (p11).

We hope you find this edition of *Bedrock* informative and can feel confident that our union is continuing to advocate for early childhood education sector members’ voices at the highest levels.

Terry Burke
IEU-QNT Secretary

Mark Northam
IEUA NSW/ACT Secretary

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UPFRONT

IEUA submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry

Our federal union has made a written submission to the Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The Commission has been asked to make recommendations that will support affordable, accessible, equitable and high-quality ECEC and reduce barriers to workforce participation while supporting children’s learning and development.

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said a key priority in our union’s submission was the urgent need to address the workforce crisis across the sector.

“The Federal Government has been on record acknowledging the valuable work and critical role our early childhood education teachers and assistants play in children’s development, but this public acknowledgement is yet to be realised through increased funding for the sector,” Brad said.

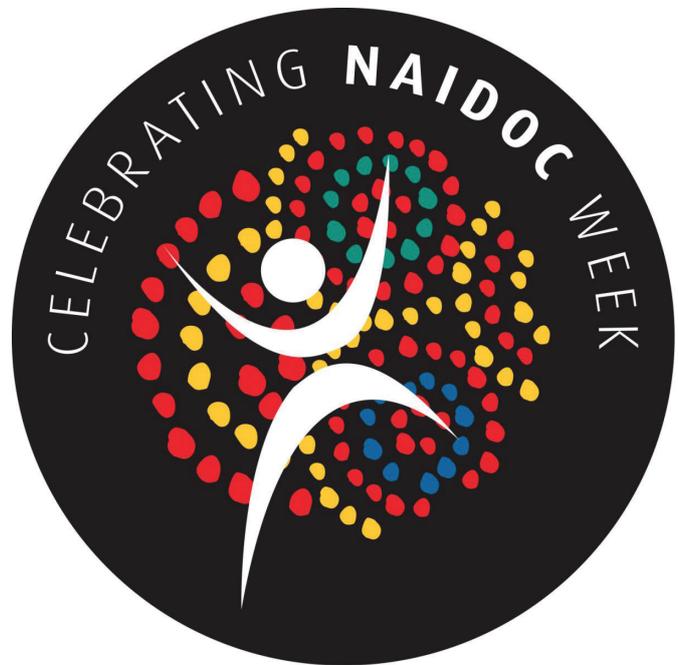
“Terms of reference for the comprehensive inquiry will explore affordability, access, workforce and benefits for children – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“All children deserve universal access to qualified early childhood education teachers delivering high-quality learning in an inclusive setting,” he said.

The inquiry will be focused on delivering two key government goals – providing a foundation for children’s future and success and removing barriers to workforce participation for parents.

There will be a broad consultation process as part of the inquiry, with the Productivity Commission’s final report due on 30 June 2023.

Read the full submission online at ieu.org.au/policy-submission



For our Elders: NAIDOC Week 2023

NAIDOC Week 2023 will be held between Sunday 3 July and Sunday 10 July, with the theme *For Our Elders*, celebrating the central role of First Nations Elders in guiding generations of advocacy and activism.

First Nations people draw strength from the knowledge and experience of Elders, in everything from land management and cultural knowledge to justice and human rights.

Their influence is evident in the Uluru Statement from the Heart

and we encourage IEU members to acknowledge their judgement that a First Nations Voice to Parliament is an opportunity to bring about a fundamental change in the relationship Australia has with its First Nations citizens (see story on page 11)

As education professionals, IEU members know the importance of First Nations voices in shaping our educational and social systems.

IEU members are encouraged to mark NAIDOC Week in their workplaces to celebrate the rich history, diverse cultures and achievements of First Nations people as the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.

Learning resources and teaching guides, activities and event information for NAIDOC Week can be accessed through the official NAIDOC website (naidoc.org.au)

Early Childhood Education & Care



IEU the union for early childhood teachers

Revamping our look in NSW/ACT

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch is undertaking exciting changes that will assist our early childhood teacher members when contacting their union. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing commitment to the IEU and your loyalty to the union movement. Without your support, we would have not been able to fight for and win workplace improvements, such as the Educational Leader allowance and allocation of non-contact time and improved rates of pay from our work value case. The following changes will be happening over the coming months:

- 1 Rebranding our early childhood IEU logo – new colours that reflect the early years.
- 2 Early Childhood Education and Care, ECEC will be the new acronym adopted by the IEU to reflect accepted terminology.
- 3 A small team of specialist IEU ECEC organisers will have coverage of our ECEC teacher members.
- 4 Contacting us will be much simpler. ECEC members will be able to email us on our dedicated email ecec@ieu.asn.au.
- 5 The ECEC organisers are available to chat with you.

It is important that you stay up to date and in contact with your union, particularly with the industrial relations will commence in June.

Changes to NQF from 1 July

Education ministers have agreed to extend workforce transitional arrangements for a further 12 months, until 31 December 2024.

This decision continues to provide flexibility for services and providers during a time of workforce shortages and enables governments to consider any recommendations that may arise out of the national qualifications review.

The following workforce transitional provisions were due to expire on 31 December 2023 and will now continue to apply until 31 December 2024:

- Regulation 239A - Regarding attendance of early childhood teachers at centre-based services in remote and very remote areas (NT, NSW, SA, TAS).
- Regulation 242 – Qualification requirements for people to be 'taken to be an early childhood teacher' (NT, ACT, NSW, SA, TAS)

Considering the workforce pressures, the ACECQA Board has determined it will also extend its 'Equivalent to an ECT' provision until 31 December 2024. See ACECQA website for details: acecqa.gov.au

A place to be me

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch will be offering the following course in Term 2 for members. *A Place to Be Me - Supporting Children's Agency* is an interactive workshop which explores the various ways educators can advocate for the child's right to be.

Participants will explore the Early Years Learning Framework's (EYLF) notion of being and how, through theory and pedagogy, they can foster a child's sense of self educator. It will work through strategies to empower each individual child's autonomy through choice, time, experiences and environments.

The course will contribute two hours of NESA accredited PD towards maintaining Proficient Teacher Accreditation in NSW. Details: ieu.asn.au



Homes for essential workers

Anglicare has produced a report *Priced Out*, which explores the crisis facing essential workers such as early childhood practitioners trying to find an affordable and secure place to live.

It estimates an average early childhood practitioner would be spending 79 per cent of their income on rent in the national average; 89 per cent in Sydney, 78 per cent in Canberra, 72 per cent in Brisbane and 104 per cent on the Gold Coast.

The report suggests resetting the tax system, including phasing out negative gearing, and reinvesting in social housing.

Read the report at: everybodyshome.com.au/resources/priced-out-an-index-of-affordable-rentals-for-australias-essential-workers/

The minister will not be happy

Imagine the scene, somewhere in Macquarie Street, Lisa Bryant writes. Prue Car's Chief of Staff is in a huddle with the other office staff. They are literally drawing straws, from the bundle in his (her?) hand. The loser is the one who must tell the new NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning...

...that no matter how bad it seemed from opposition, now the actual responsibility for governing NSW is theirs, it's clear that the NSW early education and care sector is in a much worse state than they had believed.

They must tell her that it is obvious that the NSW Department of Education doesn't quite realise (care?) how bad it is in the sector. That the \$22 million they had promised from opposition to fix the workforce issues (\$9 million in scholarships, \$10 million in professional development leave, and \$3 million on research to work out how to fix the workforce pipeline) was a case of too little, too late. That the 150 new preschools that they were going to build would probably never happen, because even if they could be built, there was literally no hope of ever staffing them.

They need to tell her that directors are leaving everywhere, as the pressure of trying to ensure they have enough staff to meet regulated ratios and qualifications every day has defeated them. That educators

are quitting for other jobs. For any job where they are not pressured to come in when they are sick. For jobs where the money was even a little a bit better (and that is in effect almost all jobs!). That directors of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services in country towns are despairing because every teacher on their casual list was choosing to work in schools where the pay was better, way better, than what they could get in almost every education and care service. That soon the public would know how bad it was, because services were having to cap numbers, close rooms and ask families to not bring children in because the service just couldn't meet regulated staffing numbers, no matter how hard they tried.

And they must tell her that despite all the noise, the outgoing government had made about their BIG plans for universal early education in NSW, it was all just froth and nonsense because the Coalition hadn't ever realised how bad the workforce issues were. How the previous government's workforce plan was little more than empty words and pretty pictures.

No quick fix

They need to work out how to tell her that there is no quick fix solution either. And how it's going to get worse before it gets better.

And they need to work out how to tell her that it sounds like the real issue is pay and workloads. How NSW preschool teachers, uniquely, unlike their counterparts in other states and territories, can earn up to 30 per cent less than teachers in schools. How educators in NSW (like educators in the rest of Australia) earn so little that they would be better off in retail jobs. How because of staff shortages teachers are not able to take lunch breaks or their non-contact time for programming/documentation.

And they must tell her that the only solution is to front up some money for wage increases or get their friends in the new Federal Labor Government to do it so the workforce shortages will decrease.

How do you reckon it will go down? Will the Minister be surprised? Or was it what she was hearing in Opposition anyway? Do



you think she will believe it? Or will she instead believe the incoming documentation that the department had prepared for her as new Minister, which barely touched on these issues, given they are so seemingly remote from the reality on the ground?

Shielded from reality

The IEU is aware that sometimes ministers are shielded from reality by their staff and by their department heads. So just in case nobody pulls the short straw, or pulls it and fluffs the message, we are going to say it loud and clear.

Fix wages in the early education and care sector before you don't have one. Fixing wages will fix the workload issue but in the meantime tell your department to get real and drop expectations.

Fix wages in the early education and care sector before services close because they can't recruit the staff they must have under regulations to operate. And before more teachers and directors quit from the work overload.

Fix wages in the early education and care sector before every other sector in NSW has a workforce crisis because without this workforce, the education and care workforce, their workforces will be crippled.

Fix wages for early childhood teachers, especially because the

quality of early education that children receive in early education and care centres, in preschools, depends on the quality of the individuals in those roles. And the quality of early education that a child receives in the early years will impact on their ability to succeed in later education.

Are you hearing this Minister Car? You need to fix early childhood teacher wages. Fund wage increases or persuade the Federal Government to do it. And do it now. And in the interim fix the work overload.

Of course, there are other things you can do to help the sector immediately. Like getting the department to understand and act on the fact that the sector and everyone in it is stressed beyond belief. Like getting the department to stop treating ECEC services as the enemy and to start working co-operatively with them to improve quality. Like learning a lot from the amount of professional development and support the Victorian Government gives their new graduate early childhood teachers and their more senior counterparts. Free mentoring and coaching? Bring it on.

Other things would help too - like simplifying the preschool funding system and stopping making it more and more complex with every far too frequent change. Like making

it equitable between services. Like not telling families that preschool will be affordable when it can't be because of inadequate funding. Like making everything simpler - for families, the sector, and the workforce, because this is in your control and simplification doesn't have to cost money.

And like admitting that your promise to build more preschools was a dumb promise in the face of workforce shortages. And renege on it. Loudly and publicly. And dropping the trial of preschools operating even longer hours than now. Because teachers can't just keep extending their face-to-face hours on a politician's whim.

Because sometimes (always?) ministers need to take bold steps. Like saying 'Our ECEC sector is on the verge of collapse. And we are going to concentrate on making sure that that doesn't happen on our watch because we understand how very, very important it is. To NSW. But mostly to the children in NSW. Because if we can't give our youngest children what they deserve, what kind of a government will we be?'

Lisa Bryant is a freelance writer and early education consultant





Setting children up for life: optimising the first 10,000 hours

Emily Campbell talks to Professor Karen Thorpe from the Queensland Brain Institute about how we can ensure all children experience quality early years education.

An Australian child can spend up to 10,000 hours in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings before commencing school.

So how can we ensure all children experience quality ECEC to make the most of this precious time that sets them up for life?

Professor Karen Thorpe from the University of Queensland's (UQ) Queensland Brain Institute is devoting her life's work to answering this question through a large-scale, longitudinal study of 600 children supported by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

She was recently awarded a prestigious ARC Laureate Fellowship worth \$3.3 million over the next five years to research what constitutes quality ECEC programs.

First five years critical

According to Professor Thorpe, who has extensive qualifications in ECEC and educational psychology, a child's experiences during their first five years of life shape their brain's architecture, which impacts how they fare at school and in life.

"It's a critical period for development, but unfortunately, nearly one in four Australian children enter school developmentally vulnerable and don't do so well," she said.



“...we learn very early about ourselves as learners; we either learn to give up or we learn to persist.”

Karen Thorpe

“Most of these children entering school who are developmentally vulnerable live in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage.

“The time spent in ECEC programs is a developmental opportunity with the potential to improve life chances for children.

“Through research and work with industry partners, we aim to understand why some programs don’t deliver on the promise of quality education, and highlight examples of programs that work well.

“Australia invests tens of billions of dollars each year in ECEC, and it’s important to ensure as a nation that we’re delivering the highest quality learning opportunities for our children,” Professor Thorpe said.

Tracking 600 children

With an enormous task ahead, Professor Thorpe explained the scope of the study and the methodology she and her research team will be undertaking over several years.

“We will be tracking 600 children in Queensland from diverse settings and geographic locations, from infancy and throughout their ECEC journey.

“To simplify it, there are four Ps I’ll be focusing on in the research: provider, policy, people and place.

“We’re hitting the ground running because we already have a lot of data from previous work and also from one of our industry partners.

“One of the issues I’ve been really interested in is equity because, from the point of view of the workforce, all jobs in ECEC are not equal, and some people are working in extremely stressful conditions.

“We will also look at things like the type of provider, the type of communities that staff are working in – because I think while we have a National Quality Standard, a standard is not always equitable, so I’m interested in finding out what additional resources we need to support those staff working in more complex communities.

“It’s vital we collect high-quality data so we can make some clear statements about the direction to improve ECEC in Australia, particularly for low-income and disadvantaged families,” she said.

Examining workforce issues

The ECEC sector has been plagued with staff shortages and high turnover, staff burnout and lack of ongoing funding certainty in previous years.

Professor Thorpe said a significant area of the research would be unpacking the workforce issues, particularly the impact of inconsistent working conditions for staff in the ECEC sector.

“I did a national workforce study as part of an ARC linkage and one of the emerging issues when we analysed data is the demands on staff in terms of compliance and the amount of paperwork they do,” Professor Thorpe said.

“Though the intention is to increase the quality, in fact some of the pressures on educators means that it doesn’t deliver what’s desired, so I’m interested in the policies, particularly things like are the demands of compliance and accountability too high?”

“Another area we will be examining is the contextual differences between staff employed in urban areas compared to regional and remote locations.

“Access to professional development (PD), the different needs of families, support networks among colleagues can differ, staff turnover, career advancement and employment opportunities can vary.

“In our workforce study, the staff turnover in Mt Isa was one in two, whereas the turnover in regional and urban areas was still not good, it was one in three.

“We want people to stay and thrive, but there’s a lot of churn in the system.

“For ECEC staff living in urban areas, it’s easy to move around within the sector, but in a mining town like Mt Isa, there are alternative sorts of work in mines that pay employees much more.”

Professor Thorpe said it was clear that without a thriving ECEC workforce, children would be worse off.

“In terms of increasing rates of teacher and educator pay, I think we need to get there quickly, because otherwise, we’ve either got workers under immense stress or workers who will leave the sector, and we cannot afford that for the economy or society.

“Our hypothesis, which is not rocket science, is that if ECEC staff are under stress, if there’s insufficient staffing, resourcing and poor working conditions, there will be staff turnover.

“Ultimately, we hope to inform policy and practice and make a difference to support ECEC staff so they can provide the best outcomes for children,” she said.

Raising the profile of ECEC professionals

An important aspect of the Laureate research into what constitutes quality ECEC will revolve around the interactions between staff and the children in early learning centres.

Professor Thorpe explained that while policy-regulated structural features of an ECEC environment such as physical resources and staff qualifications are important factors that enable higher quality ECEC experiences, positive relationships between staff and children are paramount.

“The gold standard measure of process quality, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) defines high-quality experiences as those in which the educator provides an emotionally supportive, predictable, and educationally focused environment,” Professor Thorpe said.

“This definition is well grounded in developmental studies of attachment and learning science.”

Professor Thorpe said ECEC programs are emotional and educational environments that establish children’s learning dispositions and ongoing learning outcomes.

“I think the reason why is that we learn very early about ourselves as learners; we either learn to give up or we learn to persist,” she said.

“Our data shows that the role of teachers and educators is much more critical than people currently understand.

“The emotional qualities of the environments including

respect for children, how warm and sensitive the staff are, the absence of negativity and the importance of positivity, are predictors of how well children do right through secondary school.

“Children don’t get a positive emotional environment if staff are stressed.

“I think it’s beautiful work that teachers and educators do in setting children up, through the relationships they foster.

“It’s particularly important for children who live in more complex circumstances because ECEC does provide an emotionally supportive place, not just for the children but for the families,” she said.

Professional respect and recognition

Professional respect for those working in the sector, reflected through appropriate remuneration and working conditions, will be key to attracting and maintaining a highly-skilled workforce.

“ECEC staff are not given enough credit for just how skilled they are, not only in teaching young children but in supporting families,” Professor Thorpe said.

“That becomes particularly important in the context of families living in poverty and distress, because teachers and educators provide a secure attachment figure for a child and a secure, happy place to be.

“For me, the important message here is that the wellbeing of our educators, the respecting them and the paying them properly, are all important things in the whole future of our children.”

A life’s work

Professor Thorpe’s background as an early childhood teacher and developmental psychologist who has worked with disadvantaged families in Australia and the UK will benefit the study, as will her

experience conducting large-scale longitudinal research projects.

“The work I do is based on frontline experience, which has led to a burning desire to use my skill set to promote educational equity,” she said.

“The hope is that this research will inform policy and practice that improve children’s experiences in their early years and promote development and learning which lead to positive outcomes.

“At the end of our research, we’ll be linking the individual children to the data sets in Queensland with the Education Department so we can track their progress through school to see how their experiences in ECEC make a difference.

“Then, it’s a valuable data resource for Australia to keep tracking those children.”

Professor Thorpe said she is committed to engaging with stakeholders and industry partners and having the ear of decision-makers throughout the process.

“This is a very large piece of work and while the Laureate is awarded to one person, I have a very amazing multidisciplinary team and I couldn’t do this scale without that group of people, some of whom have come through from being ECEC professionals and some through other backgrounds,” she said.

Learn more about Professor Thorpe’s work and the Queensland Brain Institute at: qbi.uq.edu.au/profile/15620/karen-thorpe

“the important message is that the wellbeing of educators - respecting them and paying them properly - are important things in the whole future of our children.”

Vote 'yes' for a Voice



IEUA NSW/ACT Organisers Tina Smith and Valerie Jones show their support for the 'yes' vote

Later this year, Australians will head to the polls and be asked a very important question: do you support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution?

The upcoming referendum is a once in a generation opportunity to recognise First Nations people and continue the nation's journey towards meaningful reconciliation.

A Voice to Parliament would enable First Nations people to have input on government policies and projects that impact their lives.

A Voice to Parliament is intended to make a real and tangible difference.

An IPSOS poll conducted in January 2023 found 80 per cent of First Nations people support a Voice to Parliament.

The referendum is an opportunity for all Australians to stand shoulder to shoulder with First Nations people and say 'yes' to constitutional recognition and practical change through a Voice to Parliament.

What would a First Nations Voice to Parliament achieve?

A Voice to Parliament is about providing self-determination to First Nations people.

Rather than symbolic gestures, a Voice would be a practical advisory body that provides feedback and

advice to government about laws and policies affecting First Nations people.

If a Voice to Parliament was introduced, First Nations people would be included in government law-making processes and enabled to provide practical advice on how laws and policies can best improve their lives.

Currently, there is no systemic process for First Nations people to provide input on government policy-making.

This means laws and policies are often made for First Nations people rather than with them.

If First Nations people have a Voice, progress can finally be made on closing the gap after decades of missed goals and limited change.

Why are unions supporting the Voice to Parliament?

The union movement has a proud history of fighting for social justice and inclusion, not just in workplaces but in society more broadly, including through First Nations recognition and reconciliation.

Union members are well aware of the devastating consequences workers often face when they are not listened to by employers or when they do not have a say in matters directly affecting them.

Unionists also understand the difference they can make, as activism does not stop at the door to their

workplaces; the issues facing workers are indivisible from the issues facing communities. Fundamentally, that is why the union movement is supporting a Voice to Parliament; it will make a practical difference and start to deliver long overdue justice to First Nations people.

How does a referendum work?

A referendum is the only way to change the Australian Constitution and can only be held after a Bill passes through Parliament outlining proposed changes to the Constitution.

All eligible Australians are then asked to vote on the proposed constitutional change. If voters agree with the change, they write "yes" in a square on the ballot paper.

If they disagree, they write "no".

A change to the constitution by referendum must be approved by a "double majority".

This means that a national majority of voters in the states and territories (ie more than half of all voters) and a majority of voters in a majority of states (ie at least four out of six states) must be in favour of the change.

Is there enough information about the Voice?

Contrary to some claims, a wealth of information about the potential Voice to Parliament is available.

The Voice was first proposed in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart. The statement was developed after an elaborate consultation process with First Nations people across the country.

In the five years since the Uluru Statement, a Senate Joint Select Committee has considered the proposal, returning a 264-page report in November 2018.

Subsequently the Indigenous Co-Design Process Final Report was presented to the Federal Government in July 2021. The 271-page report outlines options for how a Voice could operate.

Ultimately, as with any constitutional change approved by referendum, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government to implement the change effectively and in keeping with the will of the Australian people.

Read more about the Voice and get involved with the campaign for a Yes vote at: yes23.com.au

Provocations and Pintya Kuu

A look inside Flinders University's early childhood education program

Rachael Hedger is committed to ensuring preservice teachers feel supported, confident and informed throughout their studies. She spoke with Emily Campbell about her work.

As a senior lecturer and course coordinator for early childhood education (ECE) at Flinders University, Rachael Hedger helps prepare preservice teachers to thrive in their careers.

Hedger is also a PhD candidate exploring how young children can learn science concepts through arts-based practices.

Learning science concepts through art

"My research focuses on the drawing process, not just the end product we send home to parents to put on the fridge, but what is happening as the children draw," Hedger said.

"As part of this, I'm focusing on opportunities for children to draw in their science learning and being quite deliberate in the experiences or experiments I'm offering so it can all come together and lead to some excellent learning outcomes for young children."

Hedger explained her research is specifically focusing on how children represent force and movement through their illustrations.

"For example, we gave the children a straw and a ball and asked them to blow the ball through the straw to see what happened and then we asked them to represent that through their drawings.

"It's produced some interesting outcomes in terms of how children use symbols to represent movement and that's not been something many researchers have looked at previously.

"While adults might use arrows to draw force, rather than dictating to children what we do, we can guide them into these symbolic processes.

"The children have drawn spirals, dotted lines, series of circles to represent movement.

"We've also tried to pull in connections to literature in the children's science, which has been valuable in terms of positioning them within the situation and getting them to think of the science concepts we want them to focus on," she said.

Provoking imaginative play

According to Hedger, children learn best when immersed in engaging and constructive play experiences.

"One of the first things our preservice teachers at Flinders learn is the importance of play for all children, and the benefits play has for all areas of children's learning and development," Hedger said.

"A way of presenting purposeful and effective play opportunities is by creating and delivering a learning provocation.

"Provocations are an ECE concept where we set up an experience for young children to engage in, and the idea is that it provokes their interest, imagination and engagement, which motivates them to explore further."

When designing a provocation play experience, resources are usually arranged in quite an aesthetically pleasing way, which will then invite children into that space.

Hedger said one of the major benefits of provocations is they are a form of open-ended play which offers multiple entry and exit points, so it is differentiated in its design.



Rachael Hedger is exploring how young children learn science through art. (Photos courtesy of Flinders University)

“Provocations are very open-ended, so a child could engage with it two or three different times during the week or term and have a different outcome each time.

“It’s not a closed experience where there’s only one thing they can achieve, there are lots of different components to meet different children’s needs and different interests.

“Different from a learning invitation, which often has a desired outcome, provocations are open-ended and are designed to stimulate children’s ideas, imagination and creative thinking,” she said.

Preservice teachers are shown examples of provocation experiences so they can see and experience some examples, before having opportunities to practice designing their own provocations.

“What we try to encourage with our Flinders University preservice teachers is that the environment acts as a third teacher, so they will set up a space that differentiates for multiple children depending on their age, level of development or interests,” Hedger said.

“The preservice teachers will have, for example, a table and mat area and we’ll ask them to set up a provocation for infants or preschool children.

“Then, it’s their job to gather the resources and justify their choice of provocation set up by making that connection, to the literature and the curriculum, thinking about their role within that as well.

“It gives the students practical experience where they can take their time to set up those experiences in a very safe place and reflect: one where it’s okay for them to have a go, make mistakes and receive feedback,” she said.

Embedding First Nations ways of knowing

Hedger said another important focus of the Flinders ECE program was fostering culturally inclusive play, such as embedding First Nations ways of knowing in their practice.

“We need to ensure that early play experiences acknowledge and incorporate indigenous ways of knowing to allow children to connect to their culture and heritage in meaningful ways,” she said.

“Only then are they likely to successfully integrate their understanding and build on their knowledge and skills.

“In addition, children’s early school experiences need to continue the focus on play-based learning to support children’s transition to their school setting and achieve optimal outcomes.

“Coupled with this is the need for educators who hold a deep knowledge of First Nations pedagogies to be able to cater for indigenous children’s needs and support them effectively in their early years of life.”

The new Pintya Kuu room at Flinders, named by local Kurna elders and translating to ‘creative room’ in their local language, provides preservice ECE students with a wonderful space to hone their practical skills.

“Pintya Kuu is a unique space, a multi-purpose classroom that can be used for adults and working with young children,” Hedger said.

“We’re excited about what it offers in terms of practical experience for preservice teachers while they’re learning and how we are trying to connect to Indigenous pedagogies along the way.

“For example, most of our classes are taught in Yarning Circles, rather than with a typical classroom desk and chairs.



“All of our education preservice teachers complete an indigenous studies topic but also focus on indigenous ways of knowing through other early childhood topics.

“We have First Nations academics on staff, and they’re based in the college of humanities and social sciences, but they coordinate and teach our Indigenous education topic, so we connect very closely with them.

“For example, we have a literacy and numeracy birth to age four topic where the preservice teachers create play experiences focusing on First Nations ways of knowing through literacy and numeracy.

“As part of this, they write book reviews on First Nations literature, in their third year they create a First Nations reading experience, in their science topic we connect with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum links and focus on First Nations ways of learning such as making natural paint using things found in nature.

“I engage a lot with the literature and invite First Nations colleagues into the space and to check with them what we’re doing is culturally appropriate and to ask whether they have any suggestions on what we can do to improve.

“We also have a lot of very knowledgeable lecturers in education who have First Nations knowledge and teaching experience, including their PhD research,” she said.

Expanding the program

Some of the children of Flinders University academic staff have had the opportunity to play and test out the Pintya Kuu area, but Hedger said her dream is to set up a regular playgroup there for the preservice teachers to run.

“We’re looking into how we might invite children from ECE services to come and play in the space to test out what our preservice teachers are doing,” she said.

“In ECE we look very carefully at developing the knowledge of the whole child and again, looking at children’s strengths and valuing their competencies.

“We need to consider how we are measuring children’s developmental skills.

“If our assessment methods are devised using western cultures, then we are not seeing the whole child and the aspects of their mind, body, heart, and spirit that indigenous pedagogies focus on.”

“Success in a First Nations culture probably looks very different from western society metrics, so we need to make sure we’re offering accessible learning for First Nations children and doing it well,” she said.

“If our assessment methods are devised using western cultures, then we are not seeing the whole child and the aspects of their mind, body, heart, and spirit that Indigenous

Watching her children grow

Being part of a community – and watching the children she has nurtured bloom – has sustained Lisa Thornburrow in her almost 40-year career as an early childhood teacher, Sue Osborne writes.

During those years Lisa has always had the support of the union behind her. She recently received her 30-year IEU membership badge from NSW/ACT Branch Organiser Kate Damo (pictured).

Lisa started her journey in the 1980s at Sydney College of Advanced Education at Waverley in the eastern suburbs of Sydney.

“I’m the eldest of four, and my sister was 10 years younger than me. So I had a lot of interaction with her and her friends when they were little in my teenage years and my mum also started family daycare,” Lisa said.

“I also did work experience in Year 10 at our local community preschool, and it inspired me.”

Her first full-time job was at the Concord Hospital Long Day Care Centre, looking after the children of staff.

“We took them in from six weeks old. I was in with the under twos. There were many opportunities to do mini excursions within the hospital.

“My dad was the manager of Food Service, so we often took the children up and they’d go and make cookies and stack the dishwashers. There was a grassland area and it was on the river. So there were times that we would take the children down to the waterfront to watch the boats and the ferries go past.

“With all the regulations it’s changed and at our preschool we haven’t taken the children on excursion for a very long time. We’ve done walking excursions, but not jumping on a bus. Regulations are probably all for the better, but it takes away that spontaneity.”

Lisa said she loved the baby room at Concord, watching the little ones reach significant milestones. But she learnt an important lesson – not to tell the parent she had seen the children take their first steps.

Exciting milestones

“It was exciting to watch those amazing milestones for those little ones. They’re learning language, they’re learning social skills and interacting with the other children or the educators themselves. They



have so much that they learn in those early years. It’s creating their little personalities.”

After eight years at Concord, Lisa moved to West Epping Preschool, where she has stayed for the last 30 years, mostly as a part-time teacher, while she raises her own children.

“It’s a lovely setting and environment. We’ve got some wonderful families and it’s a very multicultural area. It’s nice to be part of the community. Epping West Public School is right next door and the children come and put their faces up against the fence and say hello.

“It is rewarding, especially with some of the children who had those additional needs, to see how they are progressing through life and how they’re coping at school.

“You keep those connections with the families, and you might bump into them through school or sport over the years, or even just at the shops. You see how those little ones have developed and you know their achievements and their successes.”

Lisa has seen a lot of changes over the years. “Our philosophy has evolved. I’ve noticed that it’s moved from a more structured theme-based approach to a far more child-centred, project learning, inquiry-based philosophy.

“When I first started, it would be this week we are doing ‘sea’ for three weeks and these were our activities, and we created some wonderful

experiences for them, but it’s now so much more.

“Everything can just change daily as the children’s inquiries, curiosities and interests change.”

Increased workload

“But the increased expectations on early childhood teachers to meet the workload created by regulations, standards and documentation requirements have made us a time poor profession. It is hard to meet all these requirements and still be available to the children in our services while at work, so this doesn’t always provide for a good work/life balance.

“I also think with the increase in the children’s use of ipads and tablets, sometimes their attention and patience can be challenged in social situations. They are becoming used to such instant reactions, this can be difficult when sharing experiences with other children and educators. I believe technology has some amazing advantages for learning, but it shouldn’t replace the hands-on, give it a try, and working with peers learning experiences.”

What gets Lisa out of bed every day?

“It is rewarding seeing the successes and achievements of the children, watching them grow as confident individuals exhibiting curiosity and excitement in their world around them and their discoveries.”

Our voice heard on Early Years Strategy

Our union has welcomed members' voices being heard through further consultation to develop a Commonwealth Early Years Strategy, Emily Campbell writes.

Members will recall the National Early Years Summit held at Parliament House in Canberra during February 2023, attended by IEU members and representatives.

It was the first step in the lengthy processes towards developing a Commonwealth Early Years Strategy, which the Federal Government describes as a “roadmap that sets out a shared understanding of what children and families in Australia need in the early years”.

The Summit was attended by a diverse range of industry stakeholders who participated in the consultation process and engaged in important conversations to help inform the development of the Early Years Strategy.

Long-term support required

IEUA Federal Secretary Brad Hayes said the Federal Government was to be commended for their ongoing consultation with education practitioners through the development of the Early Years Strategy.

“Australia’s early childhood education sector desperately needs long-term vision and support, and the Summit was an opportunity for a renewed focus on the importance of early childhood education for children’s development,” Brad said.

“Early childhood education sets the foundation for educational outcomes throughout a child’s life and the importance of quality education in the first five years before school cannot be understated.

“At the Summit, our union emphasised that early childhood education centres having tertiary qualified early childhood teachers and qualified learning assistants with access to a complete set of wraparound services must be at the centre of the strategy.

“The Government has set an ambitious goal to finalise the strategy by the end of the year and our union looks forward to being involved in further consultation,” he said.

According to the Federal Government, more than \$4.2 million will be invested over 18 months until 2024 to support the development of the strategy, which will be led by Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth and Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly.

An expert advisory panel has also been established to help support the strategy development and the work of a Steering Committee designed to unite all areas of government.

Member concerns heard

Brad Hayes said the Summit was a valuable opportunity for our federal union, which represents thousands of early childhood teachers and learning assistants across the country.

“The Summit heard directly from our members about the urgent repairs and reforms needed to better support staff

and deliver improved outcomes for Australia’s children,” he said.

“It was the first time all organisations – education, health, parent and business involved in the early years sector – have been brought together nationally to share their views and ideas on what was needed by all young children now and in the future.

“There are many complex challenges in the sector due to the lack of coherent and equitable policy frameworks and service deliveries for children and their families between states and service types.

“The experienced voice of early childhood education professionals will provide crucial insights into how a coordinated Early Years Strategy with young children’s learning and development at its heart can be adopted.”

Brad said IEU members live the reality of their classrooms every day – their concerns and the changes needed to deliver a world-class early childhood education system were voiced at the Summit.

IEU members raised a number of issues at the Summit including:

- the severe staff shortages faced by the sector - meaning secure jobs, enhanced career paths and improved pay rates must underpin employment practices to attract and retain valuable staff
- unsustainable workloads as the key driver behind teacher burnout, with teachers suffering endless paperwork, compliance requirements and time-wasting red tape
- the small and isolated nature of early childhood education centres which often lack the support systems and infrastructure of schools, so funds for quality professional development, mentoring programs and resources to support students with learning needs must be more widely available
- the need for long-term funding certainty across the sector, because short-term, ad hoc funding policies undermine confidence in many parts of the sector and contribute to the pay gap between early childhood centres and schools. Greater funding certainty protects our families and staff.
- the continuing lack of respect for the professional autonomy, judgment and excellence of our early childhood workforce and the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC), which has been disregarded or downplayed for too long.

IEU member and ECEC director Janene Rox attended the Summit and shared the experiences of her colleagues in the sector.



THE EARLY YEARS STRATEGY



Dr Anne Aly MP (Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education), Kate Damo (IEUA NSW/ACT Branch ECEC Organiser), Amanda Rishworth (Minister for Social Services), Rosanne Pugh (IEU member and KU teacher Ourimbah Preschool and Children's Centre), Emma McBride (Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention) and Dr Gordon Reid (MP for Robertson) at the meeting on the Central Coast, NSW

Janene spoke about how working and teaching conditions directly impact early learning.

"Outside the family, early childhood education teachers are one of the major assets in a child's life, so need to be recognised and paid for the true value of the role we play," she said.

"This will be one step towards maintaining our workforce and more importantly guaranteeing a better future for our early years children."

Our union's submission

Following the Summit, our union's next step was to make a written submission to the expert advisory panel following the release of a Discussion Paper which sought further feedback from stakeholders about what the Early Years Strategy should look like.

The federal submission, made in late April, emphasised that quality early childhood education must be central to the Strategy.

"It plays a critical role in building strong foundations for lifelong learning, promoting social and emotional development, reducing learning gaps, supporting families and delivering economic benefits," Brad Hayes said.

"Tertiary qualified early childhood teachers must be a central consideration as they are crucial to delivering high-quality teaching and learning experiences for young children, promoting positive outcomes, supporting workforce development and improving the status and recognition of those working in the profession," he said.

Brad said the submission outlined a range of measures the Federal Government must take to address the shortage of qualified early childhood teachers.

"These include funding for salaries and mechanisms to address workload, improving recognition and status, expanding training and professional development (PD) and developing partnerships with the sector.

"The success of an overarching Strategy will be directly linked to addressing the issues of attraction and retention of qualified early childhood teachers, which will provide certainty and security for quality early childhood education," he said.

A decade of damage to repair

Brad said the current early childhood education crisis stemmed from decades of disinterest, irresponsibility and the previous coalition government's 'for profit' strategies.

"Since the new Federal Government has been elected, our union has already been consulted more than we were during the entire tenure of the previous coalition government," he said.

"We are the voice of early childhood education practitioners, and should be respected as such.

"The IEU holds strong expectations the new Federal Government's Early Years Strategy can begin the long process of fixing a neglected education sector, and our members' voices must help guide the repairs.

"We hope the Government moves expeditiously to make the necessary changes to ensure quality early childhood education is safeguarded and supported into the future," he said.

Read the full submission made by our federal union online at: ieu.org.au/policy-submission

"The government has set an ambitious goal to finalise the Strategy by the end of the year and our union looks forward to being involved in further consultation."

Dangerous trend towards directed play

In an online lecture, UK academic Professor Elizabeth Wood, of Sheffield University, warns Australian and New Zealand early childhood teachers to beware of what she calls a “dangerous new trend” coming out of her homeland, Sue Osborne writes.

In England, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards for all early years providers. It’s the equivalent of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in Australia.

However, Professor Wood said some of the language in the EYFS, which is written by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED) – the notorious government body responsible for school inspections in England – is not optimal for early childhood education.

The EYFS states “all areas of learning will be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities”.

She said, “school discourses and an interest in outcomes is filtering down into early childhood”.

There are signals coming out of the EYFS that indicate play must be educational and used for specific purposes. It must help teachers demonstrate how children are meeting the outcomes in the EYFS, she said.

In her lecture, she puts forward a strong argument for the maintenance of non-directed play for children, with adults only intervening if there is an equity or exclusion issue.

She said play is not an externally driven activity, and children must be

given the opportunity to play for its own sake, individually and socially.

Adults cannot teach play

Children need to learn how to participate in play, as they pick up complex social skills along the way. Joining and participating in play with others is a learning experience for a child. Adults cannot teach children how to play or the complex social skills they are learning when they do play.

“The takeaway for me is the importance of the intellectual work that is required in early childhood education and care. We will never be able to clearly articulate and defend the importance of play for its own sake and play for learning unless we understand play in its complexity.”

Children need their own agency in play, and they bring a myriad of cultural references to play, which benefits their peers.

She cites American researcher Anna Stetsenko, whose studies look at how children bring their multicultural

identities into play, and other children learn from them during the play experience.

Everything and anything can be part of children’s play, and limiting their agency in any way can limit their learning through play.

The EYFS is focused on preparing children for school, with guided adult activities, and its philosophy limits some children’s opportunities to play, Professor Wood said.

Research has shown the productive ways adults can engage in play, but not if adults’ contributions are based solely on set learning outcomes.

The EYFS is linear and aims to maintain status quo, it does not consider different levels of development, or have space for much creativity.

Professor Wood said the New Zealand approach of seeing a child’s development as ‘woven’ together rather than a straight line of development is preferable.

She said programs such as the EYFS often dismissed popular culture, but children brought a myriad of references from pop culture into their play, and that this should not be devalued.

Her colleague at Sheffield University Jackie Marsh has done research on children’s literacy, showing how important popular culture is for their development.

Regarding the use of digital technologies in play, she argues that this should not be limited either, as research has shown children do not abandon traditional play when they have access to digital technologies. Rather they integrate the two types



of play. During this converged digital and traditional play, children are making decisions, creating, and solving problems, taking risks and developing metacognitive capabilities. Children can move between global influences and local interpretations.

Children's interests during play could be much deeper than teachers at first realise, influenced by something from their culture or home life, rather than passing shallow interests. These interests should be given free reign to develop.

Becoming part of a community

Play is how children become part of communities and engage in important exchanges of knowledge.

Play for its own sake develops relationships, experiences, places and gives materials personal and collective meaning for children.

Play knowledge connects cultural discourse with knowledge of home, early childhood education and care and communities. Limitations are dangerous.

C&K (Childcare and Kindergarten) CEO Dr Sandra Cheeseman, lecturer in early education and care, and former board member of Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) said, "Elizabeth's presentation provides a critical

provocation for all. Her experiences across varied global contexts brings diverse interpretations of the notion of play – something that we all seem to hold dear in early childhood education and care".

"Is the loss of play for its own sake, something we in Australia should be concerned about? The revised EYLF reinforces play-based learning and intentionality as core practice of early childhood pedagogy," Dr Cheeseman said.

"But is it sufficient to have an articulated commitment to play and what are the risks to play for its own sake in an era when outcomes and intentions are defined by the adult?"

"My feeling is that play should always be something that we critically examine, discuss and question. Holding on to notions that play is universally good, is fair for everyone and never disadvantages some, is naive and equally as dangerous as the loss of play.

"I suggest that we not be afraid of discourses of measurement, outcomes and achievement but rather be at the forefront of those debates and conversations. We need to bring our expertise, knowledge of children and contexts to these deliberations and set the scene for how play can meaningfully contribute to each child's learning journey.

"Play and outcomes do not need to be polarised opposites. Here is the opportunity for early childhood experts to bring the evidence, demonstrate how we see learning outcomes in play and show the rich learning that takes place through play-based pedagogies. Making learning visible is not something to shy away from. Who of us doesn't want to see each child progress in their learning and development? Thank you, Elizabeth, for sharing these perspectives.

"The takeaway for me is the importance of the intellectual work that is required in early childhood education and care. We will never be able to clearly articulate and defend the importance of play for its own sake and play for learning unless we understand play in its complexity. The emerging research is fascinating, all early childhood teachers and educators need to engage with this work and use it as the basis for the critical reflection on the impact of their work."

Reference

See Elizabeth Woods' lecture at: [youtube.com/watch?v=lwR9FYA3Z2E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwR9FYA3Z2E)

UK EYFS strategy: [gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage](https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage)

Datafication and 'schoolification' in the UK

IEUA NSW/ACT Branch ECEC Organiser, Lisa James, looks at UK moves toward digital information and formalised learning in early childhood education.

Alice Bradbury (2019) says the UK early childhood curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is subject to 'datafication' - which she describes as "practices, values and subjectivities shift towards a focus on the production and analysis of data, most often related to assessments" and "schoolification".

Bradbury defines this as "a term used to describe the adoption of school-like practices and values in ECE", leading to more formalised teaching, a focus on literacy and numeracy and grouping children according to ability based on assessments of developmental stages. Teachers admitted to planning increasing activities that allowed them to demonstrate children were achieving set learning goals.

Bradbury warns that the increasing role of digital information and the move towards more formal learning create "a mutually reinforcing need for more data and more activities to produce those data". The collection of data shapes attitudes (what teachers perceive as important) and practices (what they spend time doing).

In the UK, children are subjected to a Baseline Assessment upon entry into Reception (attended by 4-5-year olds). Teacher observations, photographs and work samples are then used to assess children's progress against 17 Early Learning Goals every six weeks.

Children are given ratings of 'emerging', 'expected' and 'exceeding'. The EYFS profile originally included 117 profile points, and teachers were required to provide three pieces of evidence for each child for each point. The Baseline Assessment contains 47 statements and teachers are required to collect data evidence on each statement.

Teachers complain that performing the Baseline Assessment on each child takes away valuable time that would have been better used to build relationships with the children in their class.

This data accumulated on children is portrayed as evidence of teachers' professionalism, leading to pressure as policies define how children's successful progress should look and teachers are constantly checking for gaps in the data they produce. The data also gives rise to meetings about children's progress and meeting 'targets'

with management and the government department that monitors quality standards.

Data can dehumanise

Simon (2005) cautioned that collecting masses of data can dehumanise, where "the individual is doubled as code, as information, or as simulation such that the reference . . . is no longer the body but its double, and indeed this is no longer a matter of looking but rather one of data analysis" (p15). As children are compared against the criteria, they begin to be simply labelled as "ahead" or "behind", rather than acknowledged as complex and unique individuals.

The UK released a report entitled *Bold Beginnings*, which recommended more focus on formal teaching and revising the existing Early Learning Goals, so they more closely align with the school curriculum. Preschool programs are evaluated according to the children's ability to meet specified outcomes. These statistics are viewed as an appropriate way of targeting government funding and accountability in terms of measuring a return on investment deemed to be 'quality' in return for government funding.

According to Bradbury, signs of 'schoolification' include increased emphasis on formal teaching/learning activities (particularly literacy and numeracy), reduced time allowed for spontaneous child-directed and initiated play and creativity, in addition to school-based pedagogical practices including grouping children according to their level of ability. Despite acknowledgement of the whole child in the EYFS, the curriculum is reduced experiences that promote literacy and numeracy. 'Schoolification' appears to be the process of recording only what can be measured, and in doing so, failing to recognise and honour the whole child.

References

Bradbury, A; (2019) Datafied at four: the role of data in the 'schoolification' of early childhood education in England. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44 (1) pp. 7-21.

Simon, B. (2005). The return of panopticism: Supervision, subjection and the new surveillance. *Surveillance & Society*, 3(1).



Teachers working in rural and remote areas can feel cut off from their colleagues. But the IEU is here to help, not just negotiating for better pay and conditions, but providing a sense of belonging.

Many rural and remote preschool teachers (and some metropolitan ones) and the majority of teachers in long day care, are languishing on the modern award, not earning as much as they could if they were part of the union, with the collective power to support them in negotiating for an enterprise agreement (EA) which provides higher pay.

Rural and remote teachers – don't go it alone, join your union

The IEU has helped groups of preschools in the south coast and Albury-Wodonga regions of NSW to achieve pay parity with school teachers. The south coast teachers have formed a collective, which gives them much more negotiating power.

The Far South Coast Collective Teachers Agreement covers Tathra, Bermagui, Pambula, Bega and Cobargo Preschools. Each preschool has their own separate enterprise agreement (EA) but they include the same provisions. The preschool teachers enjoy salaries equivalent to school teachers. This collective is a model

that could be emulated anywhere.

Tathra Preschool Director Jane Courtney told *Bedrock* in 2021 that pay parity had been made possible with the support of the IEU, in partnership with the preschools and management committee.

“Community-based preschools are often at the heart of small rural communities and I feel lucky to work at Tathra Preschool and be surrounded by a network of amazing early childhood professionals dedicated to best practice and continuous improvement,” Jane said.

On the north coast of NSW, Valla Preschool teacher Phillipa Maher said she joined the IEU because she worked in an isolated rural preschool and wanted to “enjoy the sense of collegiality being in the union brings”.

“We were on the award and the IEU negotiated an EA for us – we could never have done that on our own,” Phillipa said.

“The IEU also did a Zoom meeting with the parent committee to talk them through how an EA works.

“They provide free NESA accredited PD [NSW only] which is great in a rural area where you can't easily access PD, and travelling to PD adds to your costs.

“It's just fantastic to feel like you have this extra support and strength behind you.”

The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch has specialist early childhood organisers, all with experience working in early childhood services, who are there at the end of the phone not just to talk about pay and conditions, but to listen and provide advice on issues like Work Health and Safety, bullying, and dealing with difficult parents or parent committees.

Sometimes just having a voice on the end of the phone, especially if you work at an isolated service, makes all the difference.

Talk to your colleagues and other services about joining the union

From 6 June, changes to the *Fair Work Act* will allow services to be covered by a single enterprise agreement. This would mean services in your area could be on the same footing when it comes to offering wages and conditions to attract teachers. Forming a collective might be a great way to negotiate better pay.



Monique Roosen is an Industrial Services Officer for IEU-QNT. Kate Damo is an Organiser for the IEUA NSW/ACT Branch. They answer your industrial and legal questions as they relate to state laws and regulations.

Dear Kate

I work in a community-based preschool which follows school terms. Can my employer ask me to work during the term breaks when the children aren't there?

Rachel



Kate Damo

Dear Rachel

This depends on which agreement you are covered under. If you are on the modern award, *Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020*, the clause that refers to this is 15.4 under Hours of Work: "The ordinary hours of work for an employee during term weeks are variable. In return, an employee is not generally required to attend for periods of time when the students are not present, subject to the needs of the employer with regard to professional development, student free days and other activities requiring the employee's attendance".

You may be required to attend during non-term weeks for PD or staff meetings, but

your employer must give you six months' notice in advance in writing on which days you are required to attend. The total number of days that a teacher can be required to work during term times and non-term times, including pupil free day, is 205 days a year.

If you teach five days a week for 41 weeks of the year you have reached your 205 days and cannot be expected to work over this.

For part-time teachers this is pro-rata, for example, a two-day a week teacher only needs to work 82 days in the year.

Kate

Dear Monique

I am aware the Queensland State Government has changed the funding model for preschools. As a result, my employer has told me our preschool's programming and hours will change but they have not consulted with me about what it will look like. What can I do to get my employer to consult with me? If the new model becomes operative, should my employer issue me a new employment contract?

Suzanne



Monique Roosen

Dear Suzanne

Under the relevant award or collective agreement, your employer is required to consult with employees regarding major workplace change, including any changes to your ordinary hours or rostered hours of work. If your employer implements a change in hours or new initiative without consultation, they are in breach of the award or collective agreement.

If your employer is changing the operating model of your preschool, please contact our union in the first instance for advice and support. Our union can help you to raise concerns with your employer before any changes occur at your preschool. This should be done in writing, so you have a record of communication. Your employer may request a meeting to discuss these with you and our union. Your employer must

consider employees' feedback before a final decision is made.

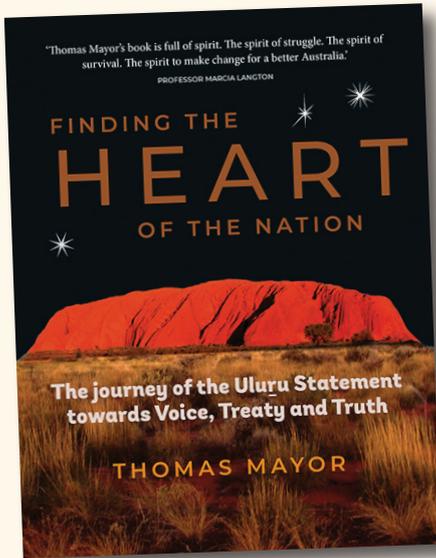
Once the new operating model has been finalised, best practice would be for the changes to commence from the beginning of the preschool year. The employer is required to provide staff with a variation to your letter of appointment (contract of employment) specifying the changed arrangements such as your hours per week and roster.

If the changes are not satisfactory for you, and if the award or collective agreement specifies, you may be entitled to a partial redundancy.

Should you have any concerns regarding consultation about workplace change or new initiatives, please contact our union.

Monique

BEDROCK GIVEAWAYS



Finding the Heart of the Nation

Author Thomas Mayor
Publisher: Hardie Grant Books

This is a book for all Australians. Since the Uluru Statement from the Heart was formed in 2017, Thomas Mayor has travelled around the country to promote its vision of a better future for Indigenous Australians. He's visited communities big and small, often with the Uluru Statement canvas rolled up in a tube under his arm.

Through the story of his own journey and interviews with 20 key people, Thomas taps into a deep sense of our shared humanity. The voices within these chapters make clear what the Uluru Statement is and why it is so important. And Thomas hopes you will be moved to join them, along with the growing movement of Australians who want to see substantive constitutional change.

Thomas believes that we will only find the heart of our nation when the First peoples – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – are recognised with a representative Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

"Thomas's compelling work is full of Australian Indigenous voices that should be heard. Read this book, listen to them, and take action."

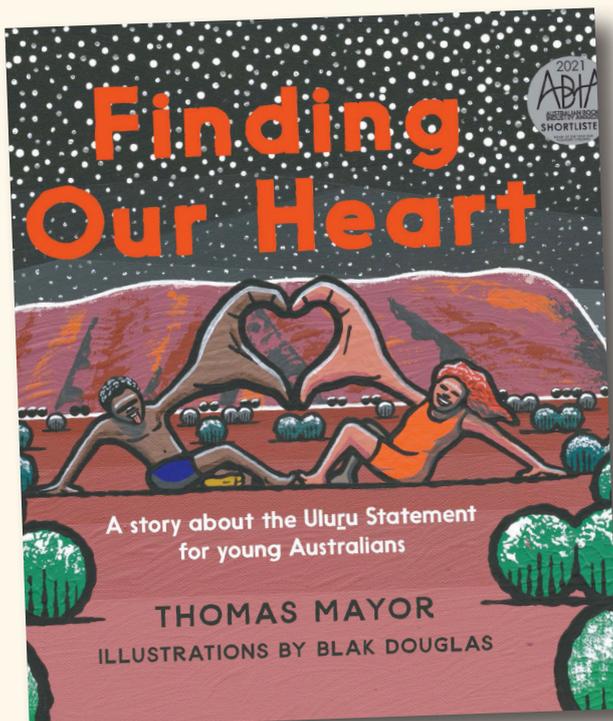
– Danny Glover, actor and humanitarian

Today's Sun

Author and illustrator: Gregg Dreise
Publisher: Puffin Books

Raise a reader with this gorgeous black-and-white board book for babies.

Celebrating Australian animals and the beautiful moments in every day, this lyrical text is paired with exquisite high-contrast illustrations by Kamilaroi author and illustrator Gregg Dreise.



Finding Our Heart

Author Thomas Mayor
Illustrator: Blak Douglas
Publisher: Hardie Grant Books

'When we all came together at Uluru, we invited all Australian people to accept our voice and culture as a gift.' Can you help us find the heart of the nation? A book for young people about understanding Australia's past, so we can have a shared future.

Email entries to giveaways@ieu.asn.au with the title of the book you would like to receive in the subject line. Write your name, membership number and postal address in the body of your email. All entries must be received by 7 August 2023.

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