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MEDIA RELEASE

Landmark negotiations for wage increases in Early Childhood Education and Care sector begin, supported by Australian Childcare Alliance

Today, the Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) joins other employer groups and the United Workers Union (UWU), the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the Independent Education Union (IEU) to begin negotiations for Government-funded pay rises and better working conditions for Early Childhood Education and Care workers.

This marks the first ever supported bargaining negotiations for the early learning sector, made possible under new provisions in the Fair Work Act and will bring the Government into the process.

Australian Childcare Alliance President, Paul Mondo, said today was a historic moment for the early learning sector.

“This will be the first time we have entered into negotiations with service providers, unions and governments all at the table, working together,” Mr Mondo said.

“Every party has the same goal - to get wages moving for our workforce - which will help attract and retain educators in a sector currently facing critical workforce issues. The success of this bargaining process is highly dependent on Government funding agreed wage increases, to ensure families are not worse off.”

Mr Mondo added that the sector is built on two pillars: a stable and supported workforce, and strong and viable services and providers.

This week, new data from a national survey of early learning centres confirmed the sector's ongoing workforce crisis is impacting Australian families, with most centres surveyed by the United Workers Union responding they faced difficulty filling staff vacancies, and many had waitlists for new families hoping to enrol in their services.

The survey also showed many families can't access the number of days they need and initially enrolled for, and when casual staff are unavailable some centres are being forced to close early or cap enrolments to meet ratio requirements.

Mr Mondo said the data was not a shock to anyone working in the sector, as the workforce crisis is the biggest challenge faced by operators.

“Our members have reported for years now that staff recruitment and retention is one of the biggest issues in the sector. As an organisation, we have consistently advocated for more government support to help attract and retain early learning educators,” he said.

“Today marks the first step towards resolving this crisis, and we look forward to working with the unions and government through this process.”

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About the Australian Childcare Alliance

The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA) works on behalf of early learning (long day care) service owners and operators to ensure families have an opportunity to access affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) throughout Australia. We represent over 2,500 members which equate to over 4,500 early learning services across the country, caring for the children from over 360,000 families.

Our national and state bodies work collaboratively with all levels of government, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders with an evidence-based approach, to ensure that families are supported into the future with a sustainable, affordable and viable ECEC sector.

ACA believes that with the right policy and financial frameworks in place, we could ensure that every child in Australia has access to high quality, affordable and sustainable early learning (childcare) services, and therefore the **best start in life**.

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