

**INQUIRY INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND  
CARE SECTOR IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
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I am writing to bring urgent attention to the ongoing crisis within the early childhood education (ECE) sector. As a vital foundation for the development and wellbeing of young children, high-quality early childhood education is essential—yet the educators and employers who sustain this sector are struggling under untenable conditions.

Many early childhood employers are facing significant financial strain, making it increasingly difficult to provide staff with even the most basic workplace health and safety (WHS) protections. Fundamental supports such as back health programs, mental health and wellbeing resources, and adequate leave for family responsibilities are often unavailable due to budget constraints. Additionally, the lack of allocated programming time within work hours has resulted in many educators taking work home, completing essential documentation and planning without pay. This is neither fair nor sustainable.

The worsening staff shortages exacerbate these issues, leaving centre owners with no viable way to maintain the level of quality that children and families deserve. Educators are overworked, underpaid, and burnt out, yet they continue to dedicate themselves to their role out of passion and commitment to the children they care for. Without intervention, this situation will lead to further attrition, making it near impossible for centres to operate effectively.

Despite these challenges, much of the work that early childhood educators do remains unrecognised. Many families do not fully understand the planning, preparation, and emotional labour that goes into providing quality care and education each day. Without appropriate recognition—both in terms of pay and broader public appreciation—there is little incentive for skilled professionals to remain in the field.

Immediate action is needed to address these systemic issues, including:

- Increased government funding to ensure employers can meet WHS requirements and provide necessary health and wellbeing support for staff.
- Improved pay and conditions for educators to reflect their essential role in child development and education.
- Policy changes that allocate paid programming time within work hours to prevent unpaid labour.
- Workforce planning strategies that address the ongoing staff shortages and ensure centres can operate at a high standard without compromising staff wellbeing.

The early childhood sector is in crisis, and without decisive action, the consequences will be felt not just by educators and centre owners, but by the families and children who rely on these services. I urge you to prioritise this matter and advocate for the urgent reforms needed to sustain and support this essential workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.