

Wednesday, 27 September 2023

## Early childhood education and care sector unions win historic first multi-employer bargaining case

An Application by the United Workers Union, the Australian Education Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia to bargain across multiple employers has been granted at the Fair Work Commission (FWC) today.

The application by the three unions was for a supported bargaining authorisation to cover 64 employers and their employees in the early childhood education and care sector. Due to this case being the first of its kind, peak councils, including the ACTU, were invited to file submissions. The authorisation, effective from today, will for the first time enable employers from across the country to come together to set a new standard for more than 500 centres, covering educators, teachers and other staff in the same agreement.

The successful case was brought to the Fair Work Commission after reforms were made to the Fair Work Act by the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act last year. Unions lodged the application on the very first day of the new provisions coming into effect, on 6 June 2023.

The FWC concluded that they were satisfied that the matters identified in the application “overwhelmingly favour the making of a supported bargaining authorisation.”

### Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

The Agreement that workers and employers will be able to negotiate now that a supported bargaining authorisation has been granted will be the first of its kind and stands to drastically improve the lives of thousands of educators.

Getting wages moving in early education is urgent, and stakeholders across the sector all agree.

“This case had strong cooperation from across the sector, with unions and employers supporting this application.

“This victory will mean that early childhood educators will now have a seat at the table through their unions.

“For years early childhood educators’ real wages have gone backward, forcing them to leave the job they love to put food on the table for their own families in this cost-of-living crisis. Over 90% of workers in the sector are women who in the past have been locked out of the bargaining process and had their work undervalued.

“Lifting early childhood educator wages is crucial to recognise the value of their work and put a stop to the workforce crisis that is devastating the sector.”

**ENDS**

**Media:** Gareth Hathway 0499 878 782