



15 February 2023

The voice of IEU members to be heard at Early Years Summit Early childhood education desperately needs long-term vision & support

The IEU welcomes the opportunity to participate in the National Early Years Summit being held at Parliament House on Friday, 17 February 2023 as part of developing the [Commonwealth Early Years Strategy](#).

The government's commitment to consult with education practitioners is to be commended. While the sector faces complex challenges, the experienced voice of education professionals will provide crucial insights on how working and teaching arrangements affect early learning.

The Summit is an opportunity for a renewed focus on the importance of early education in a child's development. We know it is the foundation for educational outcomes throughout their school life.

Our union represents thousands of early childhood teachers and learning assistants across the country – the Summit will hear directly from our members about the urgent repairs and reforms needed to better support staff and deliver improved outcomes for Australian children.

IEU members live the reality of their classrooms every day. They will be voicing their concerns at the Summit and the changes needed to deliver a world-class early childhood education system:

- Qualified early childhood teachers and educators are vital to the early development of a child, yet **early childhood education is facing severe staff shortages**. Secure jobs, enhanced career paths and improved pay rates must underpin work practices to attract and keep valuable staff.
- **Unsustainable workload is the key cause of teacher burnout**. Never-ending paperwork, new compliance requirements and time-sapping red tape is driving teachers away.
- **ECE centres are small and often isolated worksites** lacking the support systems and infrastructure of schools. Professional development, mentor programs, resources for students with learning needs and specialist wraparound care services must be more widely available.
- **We need long-term funding certainty across the sector**. Ad hoc funding policies undermine confidence in many parts of the sector and contribute to the pay gap between ECE and schools. Greater funding certainty protects our families and staff.
- **Respect the professional autonomy, judgment and excellence** of our early childhood workforce. For too long the importance of early education has been disregarded or downplayed.

The federal government's Early Years Strategy can begin the long process of fixing a neglected education sector, and the voice of teachers and assistants must help guide the repairs.