



24 September 2015

Employers and union agree to resolve kindergarten industrial dispute

Early Learning Association Australia, the Municipal Association of Victoria, and the Australian Education Union have signed a Heads of Agreement that paves the way for resolution of the industrial issues in the Victorian early childhood education sector.

This commitment will enable the parties to finalise a new enterprise agreement to replace the Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Assistants Agreement 2009 (VECTAA).

“We believe the final agreement will address the principal issues of concern to employers and employees: namely salaries, workloads, and workplace flexibility,” said Mr Shane Lucas, CEO of ELAA.

Importantly, the new agreement will recognise the vital work of early childhood teachers, enabling them to achieve salary parity with their colleagues in the primary school sector.

“ELAA has always maintained that a better-paid, well-qualified and professional workforce is the cornerstone of quality early learning provision for children,” Mr Lucas said.

“Our only concern throughout negotiations has been to ensure that parents and services have government support to meet the cost of increased wages. Early learning programs need to be viable and affordable for families, acknowledging the return on public investment that quality early learning provides for children and the wider community.”

The new agreement will also be a modern, ‘plain English’ agreement that will give service providers greater flexibility to manage programs efficiently in an ever-changing sector. This is especially important in the context of new educator-to-child ratios being implemented under the National Quality Framework from 1 January 2016.

The Heads of Agreement provides the framework for finalising the enterprise agreement and this drafting process is well underway.

“All parties are committed to finalising a formal agreement as soon as possible, ahead of a ballot and approval process as required under the *Fair Work Act*,” Mr Lucas said.

“We want to acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government in bringing the parties together and achieving the Heads of Agreement.



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“Since February, officers of the Department of Education and Training have worked closely and collaboratively with ELAA, MAV and the AEU to address the core issues of salaries, workloads and workplace flexibility.

“We also acknowledge the significant role played by the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, in securing additional funding from government to support this agreement, while ensuring that the outcome remains within Government’s wages policy.

“The Andrews Government has honoured its election commitment to “get involved” and to help resolve this dispute; and it has also honoured its commitment under the historical funding formula for kindergarten services, whereby government contributes 65 per cent of costs, and parent fees, fundraising and other sources contribute 35 percent.”

“However, we will also continue to advocate that a 1990s-era funding formula needs to be reconsidered, and a more equitable, longer-term approach to funding early learning established.

“We strongly believe that a viable, affordable and accessible early learning sector must be the solid foundation of a genuine Education State.”

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