



## **Statement from Early Learning Association Australia regarding: AEU Strike Day – Thursday 26 February 2026**

26 February 2026

### **Today's Kindergarten teachers strike is what happens when a workforce is left behind.**

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) acknowledges the 24-hour strike by members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) taking place today across Victorian kindergarten services.

After more than 18 months of stalled progress, negotiations for a new Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Agreement (VECTEA) have resumed, but the Victorian Government's funding offer does not yet meet the needs of our workforce.

Quality early childhood education requires a stable and skilled workforce. Under the Victorian Government's Free Kinder policy, wages are 100% government-funded and families are not charged extra fees.

While this is of financial benefit to families, it means that we must wait for the Victorian Government to provide a funding offer that values the impact this workforce has on the lives of Victoria's youngest children.

Victorian early childhood educators and teachers are the lowest paid in the country.

ELAA CEO Dr Karina Davis said this situation did not have to reach this point.

"These are the people who do some of the most important work in our children's lives. They are skilled, qualified and devoted to the children in their care. They deserve to be paid fairly for that work," says Dr Davis.

"Victorian early childhood educators and teachers are dedicated professionals who are loved by children, their families and their communities. They should not be the most underpaid in the country," added Dr Davis.

ELAA has been negotiating with the AEU in good faith for more than 18 months. Teachers and educators have not received a new wage agreement since 2024. With the Fair Work Commission recently formally recognising this workforce as historically underpaid through its gender undervaluation review, and mandatory increases taking effect from next month, the case for action has never been clearer.



## EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA – THE VOICE FOR PARENTS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

"This matter can only be resolved if the Victorian Government recognises the value and impact this workforce - historically one of the lowest paid in the country - has on the lives of Victorian children and families. Our members want to pay their staff fairly. Right now, the government's own funding model prevents them from doing so. That is not acceptable, and it cannot continue," says Dr Davis.

ELAA remains committed to reaching a resolution in the VECTEA bargaining that recognises the true value of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers and the pivotal role they play in shaping the lives of children across the state.

**For more information on ELAA and to arrange an interview with a spokesperson, contact:**

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*ELAA is the national peak body for not-for-profit providers of early childhood education and care. Our vision is Excellence and Equity in Early Childhood Education and Care. [www.elaa.org.au](http://www.elaa.org.au)*