



QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION

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Tuesday, 31 March 2009

ECE-CB09002js

Early Childhood Education



CHAPTER BRIEFING No. 2

Dear Colleagues

There are number of significant developments occurring in early childhood education. This briefing will provide summary information in relation to a number of positions and request that you take action to protect the profession and status of early childhood education.

Employer actions a threat to your profession

The Australian Community Services Employers Association (ACSEA) has made a written submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) arguing that employees in early childhood education should not be covered by an education award, but should be covered by the same award which covers childcare. Further, ACSEA has argued that early childhood education should be part of the "health and welfare services" industry.

Community kindergartens exist to provide an educational program for young children. The submissions made by ACSEA are directly inconsistent with the very reason for the existence of the employers whom they purport to represent.

Please sign a petition

We have attached a petition, and a Question and Answer sheet, which provides background information on the new modern federal awards and the position being adopted by ACSEA.

We encourage all employees in early childhood education, whether union members or not, to sign this petition in support of the retention of your status as early childhood education professionals.

We also request that you provide a copy of this briefing, and the attached Question and Answer sheet to your committee. Your committee should be asked whether they support your community kindergarten being covered by an education award or by a health and welfare services award.

By signing this petition employees will demonstrate that they wish to remain part of the education industry.

Any committee which supports early childhood education remaining within the education industry would be encouraged to write to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to indicate their support.

Teacher contact hours – introduction of Federal Government policy

The Federal Government has a policy which would see all four year old children able to access 15 hours of pre-school, delivered by a university qualified early childhood teacher, for 40 weeks per year. Various pilot programs in relation to this policy are currently being considered.

However, QIEU has become aware of significant disinformation in relation to the interaction of this policy and the conditions of employment for early childhood education teachers.

Your union has not agreed to increase the student contact hours for teachers to 30 hours per week.

If and when the question of hours is raised with us it will be the subject of consultation and discussion with members.

Collective Bargaining

We have previously advised members that QIEU has attempted to re-start collective bargaining negotiations with ACSEA. These negotiations are important because the next wage increase due in state schools may occur at the end of May or the beginning of June this year. We have attempted to avoid the problems associated with the timing of increases which have disadvantaged early childhood education employees in the past.

However, ACSEA is currently refusing to reschedule negotiations around the next collective bargaining agreement.

In a welcome move the Crèche & Kindergarten Association (C&K) has invited QIEU to participate in negotiations for a new agreement covering branch centres. Further information will be provided in relation to these negotiations as they develop.

Kind regards

John Spriggs
Senior Industrial Officer
Attach

Early Childhood Education is Education

Your wages and working conditions are at risk as the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (as required by the federal government) is considering how your minimum wages and entitlements should be protected.

For some employees in early childhood education your wages and conditions are set by an award. For the majority of employees your wages and conditions are determined by a collective agreement.

For early childhood education employees covered by a collective agreement the award will be the “base” upon which your collective agreement is built. This means that the content of the award will be taken into account in the negotiation of the agreement.

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission is now reviewing the awards which will be in the educational sector. This means that the base document providing your wages and conditions is currently being reviewed.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Why is the award relevant?

A: An award provides a minimum safety net of working conditions and wages. An employer cannot provide less than the award wages and conditions.

The award also sets the basis for a collective agreement.

Q: Why are awards being reviewed?

A: The current federal government made a key election commitment to provide a fair and simple industrial relations system.

As a result the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) was required by the federal government to review existing state and federal awards, and to create new modern awards grouped by either industry or occupation.

Historically and practically early childhood education employees have been covered by educational awards.

The AIRC has now commenced consultation regarding those awards to be considered as part of the education sector.

Q: Why are my wages and conditions at risk?

A: Unfortunately some unions and employers are not happy that your award will continue to be considered an education award.

Some unions and employers have said that early childhood education should form part of the “health and welfare services” industry and be included with the childcare award.

Consequently, there is the risk that wages and conditions of employment will be based on an industry other than education.

This could mean that the classification structure and patterns of employment applying in early childhood education may be lost.

If wages and conditions are adversely affected this could disadvantage you and have a negative impact on the education provided to young children.

Q: Why an Education Award?

A: Teachers and assistants in early childhood education are involved in delivering an educational program to young children. Early childhood education employees strongly identify with other educational workers.

It is unlikely that education professionals will be attracted to work in an industry other than education, particularly where the wages and conditions of employment for that other industry result in an employee receiving inferior conditions compared to their education colleagues.

Q: How can my voice be heard?

A: The AIRC is now seeking input from interested parties in relation to educational awards.

You can add your name to the attached petition which calls on the AIRC to listen to the views of employees in early childhood education and ensure your base award is an education award.

Your union will take this petition to the AIRC as part of our argument that employees want to remain in the education sector.

Your voice can make a difference. Please join with your colleagues in making this statement.

Show this petition to your colleagues, whether they are members of the union or not, so that their voice can also be heard in relation to this serious issue.

Q: How soon should I act?

A: Your action is urgently required. Please sign the petition and return it to your union at fax (07) 3839 7021, enquiries@qieu.asn.au or QIEU, Reply Paid 418, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006. **Please return the petition by Friday, 10 April 2009.**

Terry Burke
Secretary
Independent Education Union
Queensland and Northern Territory Branch

**Please act immediately to
protect your future**

March 2009

PETITION

TO: The President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission

This petition is made by employees working in early childhood education to draw to your attention our desire to remain in an award in the educational sector.

As signatories to this petition we respectfully request that you consider our wishes to be employed under an award in the educational sector which recognises the unique aspects of employment in education, and which recognises the important role that early childhood education employees play in educating young children, who are the future of our nation.

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Authorised by: Terry Burke, Secretary, Independent Education Union Queensland and Northern Territory Branch