



Mr Gerry McInally
Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

4 October June 2024

Dear Mr McInally

**Inquiry into the Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers
(Special Account) Bill 2024**

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to this inquiry.

Uniting NSW.ACT contributes to the work of the Uniting Church in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, through social justice advocacy, community services and spiritual care. We provide services for all people through all ages and stages of life, and drive solutions to systemic issues that hold disadvantage in place. We aim to inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice. We value diversity and always welcome everyone exactly as they are.

In this submission, we draw on our experience as a provider of over 50 pre-schools, long daycare centres and out of school hours care services in NSW and the ACT with over 6.500 enrolled children. We believe every child should have access to high quality early learning. It promotes healthy development from around the age of four, helps children prepare for school, and provides a way for families living with vulnerability and disadvantage to build strong ties with their community and access early supports.

We support the primary objective of the Bill, and encourage Parliament to pass it promptly. We strongly support pay increases for people working in the early childhood education and care sector, because low wages are contributing to workforce shortages and skill/qualification gaps and these are affecting the ability of early learning services to deliver on their promise to the community.

We are a member of ELACCA, and endorse its submission on the Bill. We specifically support the issues ELACCA raises around the implementation of pay increases, which are not formally part of the Bill itself. We call on the government to:

- Commit to maintaining pay increases beyond the life of the grants program, so that providers have certainty around this essential driver of their cost base;

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- Revise the grant timeframes and proposal to pay in arrears, to reduce the administrative burden and financial risk (particularly for smaller providers); and
- Provide a process for providers to apply for flexible application of caps to fee increases, for example where the cap would affect the viability of services.

For additional information or comment, please contact [Dr Tom McClean](#), Head of Research and Social Policy,

Yours sincerely,

Dr Andrew Montague
Director Communities
Uniting NSW.ACT