

4 October 2024

Education and Employment Legislation Committee
eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024

Big Fat Smile is a not-for-profit Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) organisation in the Illawarra and has been a pillar of the community since its establishment in 1981.

Big Fat Smile operates 25 long day care and term-only preschools and 12 Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services. Our team of 650+ Educators and Teachers enrich the lives and minds of over 3000 children and families in their community daily.

Big Fat Smile welcomes the Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024 to provide a legislative basis for the Government's commitment to fund a 15% wage increase for early childhood educators over the next two years.

Furthermore, bipartisan commitment for a funded wage increase would ensure the sector offers improved pay and conditions for the ECEC workforce into the future – well beyond the 2028 sunset date included in the Bill – without adding financial burdens on families.

Without a stable, experienced workforce to deliver high-quality ECEC, large proportions of parents would simply not be able to participate in work, study, or training, resulting in negative impacts for them, their children, and the economy. This Bill makes a significant downpayment on addressing the challenges facing the sector. By doing so, these actions enhance the professional standing of early childhood teachers and educators.

However, securing a long-term funding mechanism as part of broader sector remains crucial to sustain and improve pay and conditions for the ECEC workforce beyond 2028, ensuring improved quality, accessibility, affordability, and support for gender pay equity.

Big Fat Smile urges all sides of Parliament to back this important reform and work towards the next critical step of securing ongoing support to increase wages for ECEC professionals, recognising the vital role of the ECEC workforce in supporting families and children, and ultimately contributing to the nation's economic productivity.

Sincerely,

Marina Harris
Acting Chief Executive Officer



**We enrich the
lives
and minds of
our children
and families
in their
communities.**

Big Fat Smile Head Office
ABN: 82 002 796 232

1/276 Keira Street,
Wollongong, 2500

PO Box 957
Wollongong, 2520

e) info@bigfatasmile.com.au
ph) 02 4283 9900
fx) 02 4283 9901