

## **Inclusion**

A workforce strategy for additional assistants needs to be part of the broader workforce strategy.

We know that qualifications matter and that they have a direct impact on the quality of educational programs being delivered and the educational outcomes for children, therefore additional assistants should be required to hold a qualification. Teachers, educators and additional assistants need to have the skills and knowledge to be able to confidently and competently support, educate and ensure all children are fully accessing an ECEC program that is modified to meet their individual needs and that is inclusive and best practice.

Part of the attraction and retention strategy for additional assistants is ensuring they receive pay and conditions that is reflective of the importance of their work to enable all children to access inclusive learning environments that allow for all children to develop, learn and thrive. This is a fundamental right.

### **Should there be more flexibility within the guidelines for providers to access the grant?**

No.

AEU's position is that EC providers accessing the funding should be part of a union bargained agreement. The easiest way for providers to join an EA, is to be part of the MEA.

Union bargained agreements provide accountability to ensure that all the funding received is going directly into members wages. It also means there is enforceability of the EA's pay and conditions.

The EC worker retention payment guidelines and criteria for providers to access the grant are reasonable and appropriate.