



L to R: Sue Lines (LHMU Assistant National Secretary), Sue McCullea (NSW), Anya Errey (NSW), Kate Ellis (Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care), Katie McCarthy (ACT), Bronwen Jefferson (Vic) and Monique Wickham (Tas) in the Minister's office at Parliament House.

Childcare members brief Minister

Five childcare professionals, members of LHMU - The childcare union, met with new Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education and Care Kate Ellis last week about proposed changes to childcare.

The Minister recognised the work of childcare union members in the **BIG STEPS in childcare** campaign when she said she

is "committed to working with union members on the reforms".

"We told the Minister what childcare members wanted to see in proposed government reforms: recognition of experience in qualifications, study support and pay that attracts and retains skilled staff," reports **Bronwen Jefferson** who works at Queensberry Children's Centre in Melbourne.



Katie McCarthy, a degree qualified early years teacher from Canberra, says: "It's important we raise the profile of childcare professionals. We need to win better conditions to deliver quality care. The Government wants to increase formal qualifications in childcare. We told the Minister higher formal qualifications in the sector will improve quality but only if the Government makes training for childcare professionals more accessible."

Sue McCullea, working at KU in NSW, raised the issue of low pay with the Minister. "We told the minister many of us leave childcare because it is still a low paid job. We are losing experienced and dedicated people because they cannot survive financially - some even work a second job. This is a great cost to the industry. The Government needs to support better wages in the industry to attract and retain the best staff to work with children and families."

Monique Wickham from Tasmania says: "The government's proposed standards are a step in the right direction but I'm concerned that some of the ratios proposed are worse than some states currently practice. We need a stronger voice. I want to make sure we keep going forward. We need to act now to make sure the Government puts in place reforms that work for staff and children. I'll be working with other union members to influence the Government both at a state and federal level."

Union members presented the Minister with a submission on the reforms.

Over 500 union members working in childcare contributed their views by completing a survey.

Here's what you said:

- **91%** want states to keep better ratios where they have them
- **77%** believe low wages stop childcare professionals improving skills
- **63%** believe lack of paid time to study makes upskilling unaffordable
- **83%** agree minimum qualifications are important
- **93%** believe experience should count towards formal qualifications
- **85%** want government-funded staff training to better understand legal and professional responsibilities



Preparing to brief the Minister

To win the best reforms for staff and children I will:

- ✓ Join with other childcare professionals in my union
- ✓ Participate in **BIG STEPS** campaign committee meetings
- ✓ Speak to people I work with about **BIG STEPS**
- ✓ Lobby my local politician with other union members

