



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

**OUR
VISION:
EVERY
YOUNG
CHILD IS
THRIVING
AND
LEARNING**

15 July 2021

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian
Premier of NSW
willoughby@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning
office@mitchell.minister.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Brad Hazzard
Minister for Health and Medical Research
wakehurst@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Premier and Ministers,

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) NSW is urging the government to include the early childhood education and care workforce as a priority group in the relevant NSW Health vaccination protocols and guidelines.

The early childhood education and care sector (ECEC), is experiencing impacts of the COVID-19 virus as is the general community. Significant challenges faced by families and the community have been supported by this sector throughout the COVID pandemic. The ECEC sector has been deemed an **essential service**, since the start of the pandemic to support children, families and the economy. Early childhood teachers and educators are therefore classed as **essential workers**.

Early childhood teachers and educators work in settings with **increased risk of exposure** with the frequent close contact with children and families. The potential for virus **transmission is** high given the difficulty of social distancing with young children. With the emergence of the new COVID Delta variant, the risk of transmission has increased significantly.

Early childhood personnel are dedicated professionals. They will continue to act as 'essential workers' as the government and community has asked with little or no recognition for the important work, they undertake.

Frequent and daily interactions with a range of families and young children leave an already stretched workforce in a position where they are continually at risk of being exposed to COVID. This poses health and operational challenges for personnel and families needing access to ECEC to be able to continue to undertake essential work. During 2020, we saw a number of early childhood personnel leave the sector because of this high risk and their feelings of vulnerability.

Given that a significant number of families and children depend on early education and care, we need to do all we can to keep centres operating safely and retain the early childhood workforce.

Teachers and educators strongly request to be listed as a priority for vaccination against COVID-19. This will protect not only themselves and their own families, but the children and families using the services where they are employed. The increased risk of exposure to the virus, combined with current workforce shortages in the early childhood sector, means that to sustain these educational resources as essential services, early childhood teachers and educators need to be given priority access to the vaccines.

ECA NSW believes that all early childhood personnel need to be recognised as frontline workers for the purposes of the vaccination rollout. The best way to ensure the health, safety and protection for teachers and educators AND the children and families using early childhood settings is to vaccinate all personnel as a priority.

This letter has also been shared with the Independent Education Union, United Voice and the Hon. Greg Hunt, Minister for Health and Health and Aged Care.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this urgent issue. Please contact Julia Ham at 0429 779 039 or office@nsw@earlychildhood.org.au to arrange a suitable time.



Carol Burgess
ECA NSW President

About ECA

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is a non-profit organisation that promotes and works towards what is best for children and the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. Since 1938, ECA's main focus has been advocacy, influencing many significant issues relevant to the care, wellbeing and education of young children in Australia. We develop projects in the sector and produce a variety of resources by way of subscription-based publications for our members and the broader sector which includes early childhood educators, services, academics and students. Our vision is that every young child is thriving and learning. To achieve this, we champion the rights of young children to learn at home, in the community, within early learning settings and through the early years of school.