National education and union news



AEU welcomes ECEC guarantee

More of Australia's youngest learners will get access to early education with the passing of the Albanese Government's three-day guarantee of early childhood education and care (ECEC).

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has welcomed the passing of the Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Bill 2025 as a victory for families and children, as well as the early childhood teachers and educators that make it possible.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that guaranteeing access to at least three days of care each week will benefit children in the most formative years of their lives.

"The passing of this bill is a major win for children, families and the teachers and educators who are at the heart of these services," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong learning, social development and emotional wellbeing."

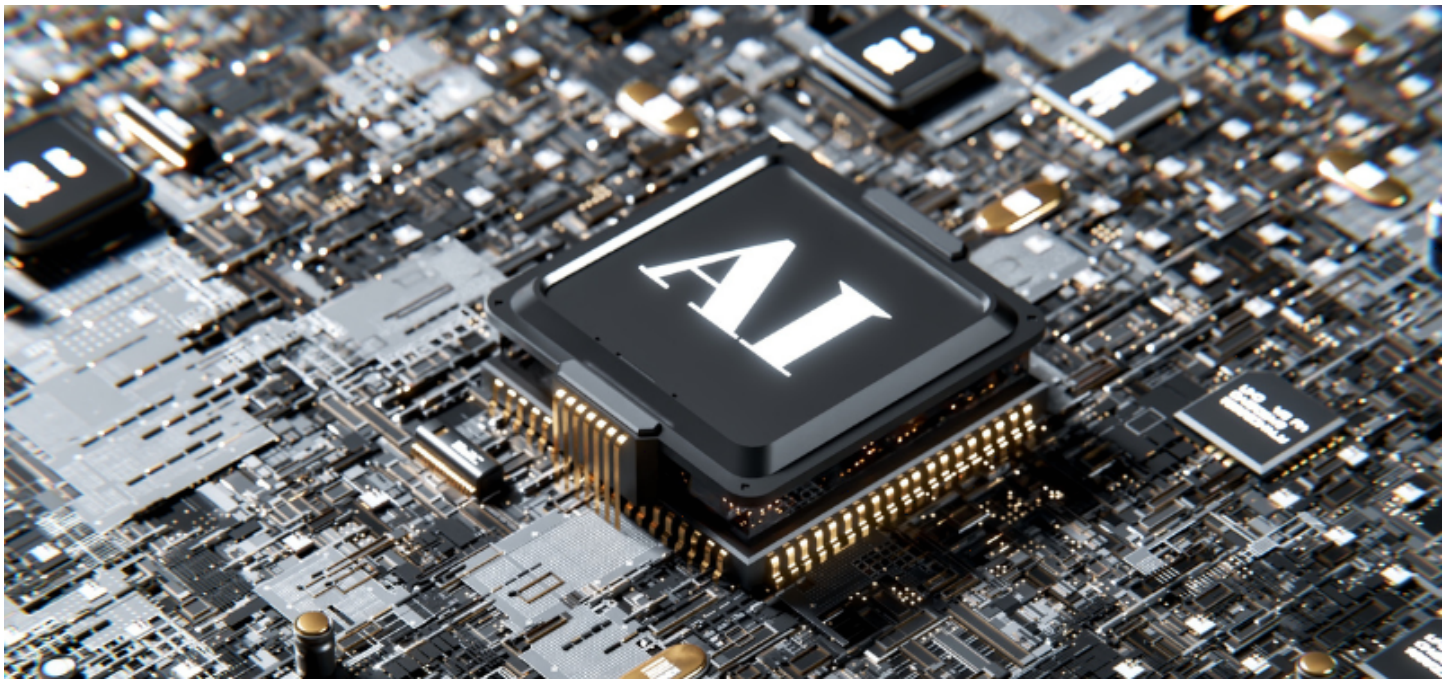
Ms Haythorpe said that for early childhood teachers and educators, the passage of this bill represents an important acknowledgment of the critical role they play in shaping the futures of Australia's youngest learners and will ensure that all children will have access to consistent and quality education and care, which is vital for their development in the early years.

"AEU members have tirelessly campaigned for better provision of early childhood services in Australia and it is welcome news that the Albanese Government has recognised the importance of early education and the significant contributions that early childhood teachers and educators make to the development of every child," she said.

"Early childhood teachers and educators are central to the success of this policy, and the AEU is committed to continuing its advocacy to ensure that early childhood education and care is properly funded and that the professionals who work in this sector are fairly compensated for their essential work.

“Ensuring fair pay, improved working conditions and professional development opportunities will be key to retaining and attracting skilled early childhood educators and teachers.

“Furthermore, we need two years of universal access to preschool delivered by a qualified teacher, for all children in the years before school. We call on the Albanese Government to make this commitment in the lead up to the federal election this year.”



New AI report calls for stronger rights and protections for workers

The ACTU welcomes recommendations to strengthen workplace rights outlined in the newly released report by the House Standing Committee’s Inquiry into the Digital Transformation of Workplaces.

The Committee’s report calls for stronger protections against intrusive employer surveillance, new worker consultation measures and improved rights for workers to control their own data, including banning employer use of high-risk data as well as the sale of personal data to third parties.

The report recognises the potential benefits of AI for workers but also highlights the risks of employers exploiting new technologies to undermine wages and conditions. Other recommendations include permitting greater transparency and ensuring clarity on employer liability for decisions made with AI and automated decision-making tools.

With the federal election fast approaching, the report provides further evidence of the risks posed by the Coalition’s commitment to repeal workplace rights and protections.

The weakening of workplace protections risks empowering companies to undermine working people’s wages and conditions, especially in an increasingly digitised future.

Unions argue that worker-centric laws are necessary for AI to lift people’s living standards and allow productivity gains from new technologies to be shared more evenly.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Joseph Mitchell said the adoption of new technologies should benefit all Australians, not just big business.

“The union movement wants the fair go protected in the age of AI, so we welcome the Albanese Government’s forward-thinking approach in this important space,” he said.

“The recommendations support a core principle of Australian Unions – that everyone should have a say over their wages and conditions at their workplace. We can’t risk our rights at work being stripped away by Peter Dutton, especially given the growing use and misuse of AI by powerful companies.

“Too often, we have seen AI used by multinational giants to undermine workers’ wages and conditions. Whether it’s

workplace surveillance or using algorithms to sack workers, bosses should be accountable for decisions made using AI models and tools.

“Workers deserve greater transparency over AI adoption and the collection of personal data by their bosses. There should be no decision about us without us.

“As the federal election approaches, it’s clear that our rights at work are at serious risk of being taken away. Employer groups argue that workers don’t deserve to be front and centre in AI decision-making in their workplace. These are the same big business lobbyists pushing Peter Dutton to scrap penalty rates and take away other workplace rights if he is elected. Australians can’t risk weaker workplace rights, especially in the age of AI.”



Cost-of-living boost for apprentices

Australian Unions welcome the Albanese Government’s announcement of a $10,000 wage bonus for apprentices to work in housing construction and clean energy.

The policy follows the release of the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System, which revealed that low wages were a key barrier to entry and completion of apprenticeships.

Starting July 1, 2025, eligible apprentices will receive five $2,000 payments, supplementing their wages, over the course of their apprenticeship.

The incentive payments aim to ease cost-of-living pressures, increase apprenticeship completion rates and build a long-term pipeline of skilled workers in housing construction and the clean energy industry.

The program will support the federal government’s plan to build 1.2 million homes in five years under the Homes for Australia initiative.

Eligible occupations will be determined in consultation with Jobs and Skills Australia and Jobs and Skills Councils.

Other measures announced include the extension of training support and hiring incentive payments, an increase in the Living Away From Home Allowance and a boost to wage subsidies for hiring more apprentices with a disability.

The plan builds on the federal government’s expansion of Free TAFE and the slashing of HECS debt for students. The investments in skills and training will help rebuild the VET sector following a decade of cuts and neglect by the previous Coalition government.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O’Brien said: “Unions hear from apprentices across Australia that the biggest barrier holding them back are low wages. You can’t address cost-of-living without a plan for wages, and that’s why [the] announcement of a $10,000 wage bonus is so important.”

“Thousands of young Australians, especially in our outer suburbs and regions, make huge sacrifices to pursue an apprenticeship so they can get ahead. The $10,000 wage bonus will go a long way in easing their cost-of-living so they can build Australia’s future,” he said.

“The Albanese Government’s expansion of Free TAFE and their boosting of apprentice wages will help repair Australia’s skills and training sector after a decade of cuts and closures from Peter Dutton’s Coalition.

“Tradies finally have a government that is on their side and actually cares about investing in their future.”

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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