

Childcare workers rally for equal pay ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

An estimated 7000 childcare workers took industrial action by walking off the job around Australia on September 5 to demand equal pay.

This is the fourth such walk-out in the past 18 months and it was by far the largest with more than 350 centres closing.

United Voice, the union covering early childhood educators, are paid as little as \$22 an hour, much less than other education workers, who receive up to 30% more. The Big Steps campaign is also highlighting that 97% of childcare educators are women, which contributes to the large gender pay gap in the sector.

A crowd of about 700 gathered in Melbourne's Federation Square at 4pm and sang union songs before hearing from several speakers.

National Assistant Secretary of United Voice Helen Gibbons thanked those who came and called on newly-installed Prime Minister Scott Morrison to value their jobs, or get ready to lose his at the next election. She also demanded a 30% increase in pay.

Labor's Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Brendan O'Connor repeated assurances that Labor would support childcare workers if Bill Shorten became the Prime Minister. However, he did not mention any specific policy or promises to the striking workers, something that seems to be a typical example of how the Labor Party has relied workers and the union movement for support while not backing up their demands.

Later on, the striking childcare educators marched up Swanston Street to the State Library to hear from more substantive speakers.

One of these was a representative of the New Zealand Educational Institute, the corresponding union from across the Tasman, which recently won their demand for a 30% pay rise after a long campaign. Their example shows that these fights can be victorious.

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