Stage 3

New minimum pay rates and phasing

1. Overview – what is changing

New minimum wage rates have been set under the Children's Services Award as part of the Gender Undervaluation Priority Awards Review.

Across the transition period, minimum wage increases range from **9.4% to 27.8%**, measured against relevant previous classification reference points.

These increases:

- reflect **work value adjustments only,** and
- are **exclusive of Annual Wage Review increases**, which will continue to apply during the phasing period.

Who this is for:

Approved Providers, payroll and finance managers

What this fact sheet is for:

To explain the new minimum pay rates, when they apply, and how staged increases operate.

2. Operative date

The Award variations take effect from the **first full pay period on or after 1 March 2026**.

From this date, employees must be paid at least the applicable **new minimum rate**, subject to any retained higher rates under Schedule I.

3. New minimum weekly rates (effective from 1 March 2026

(Rates from Determination PR794818)

Level	Title	New Weekly Rate (from 1 March 2026)	New Weekly Rate (from 30 June 2026)
Level 1	Introductory Educator	$995.40	$1,045.20
Level 2	Educator	$1,025.90 (Pending: L3A.1: $1,052.00; L3A.2: $1,068.40)	$1,077.20
Level 3	Qualified Educator	$1,121.80 (L3.3 < 4 yrs exp: $1,140.10)[1]	$1,177.90
Level 4	Experienced Educator	$1,197.10	$1,257.00
Level 5	Advanced Educator	$1,263.30	$1,326.50
Level 6	Room Leader	$1,321.50 (L4A: $1,197.10)[2] (pending (L4A.1-4: $1,197.10; L4.5: $1,204.00)	$1,387.60 (L4A: $1,257.00)
Level 7	Assistant Director	$1,381.90	$1,451.00
Level 8	Director	$1,593.50 (For previous level: 6.4 - $1,613.50; 6.5 - $1,628.30; 6.6 - $1,647.70; 6.7 - $1,667.40; 6.8 - $1,686.40: 6.9 - $1,705.50)[3]	$1,673.20 6.8 - $1,686.40 6.9 - $1,705.50

Some employees will continue to be paid at higher preserved rates where those rates exceed the new minimum rates, in accordance with Schedule I of the Award.

[1] The minimum rate of pay for CSEs on level 3.3 as at 28 February 2026 will be retained to the extent it is higher than the increased rate.
[2] A separate phasing in arrangement applies to CSEs on level 4A as at 28 February 2026. The reference point for the increases will be level 4A.1 instead of 4.1.
[3] The minimum rate of pay for CSEs on levels 6.4 to 6.9 as at 28 February 2026 will be retained to the extent it is higher than the increased rate.

4. Important clarification – minimum rates set the floor

The Award sets **minimum pay rates**. It does not prescribe automatic pay increases for all employees.

At all times, an employee's pay must be **at or above** the applicable Award minimum rate for their classification.

Employers are only required to increase an employee's pay where the rate currently being paid is **below** the new minimum rate.

Where an employee is already paid at or above the new minimum rate:

- **no adjustment is required at that time.**

This includes employees receiving the **Worker Retention Payment**.

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5. Staged increases – timing and phasing

Initial staged increase

A **5% increase** applies from the first full pay period applied using the simplified classification structure on or after **1 March 2026**, calculated on the relevant reference point level and subject to Schedule I.

Second increase is payable on the 30 June 2026 and then the subsequent staged increases.

Subsequent staged increases

Further staged increases apply **annually on 30 June**, concluding by **2028 or 2029**, depending on classification.

Annual Wage Review increases will apply in addition to the staged increases outlined above.

- **Levels 1 to 3, Level 4A and Level 8:** staged increases through **30 June 2029**
- **Levels 4 to 7:** staged increases through **30 June 2028**

Staged increases apply annually on 30 June from 2026 through to 2029, depending on classification.

6. OSHC clarification (pay application)

The revised classification definitions support accurate application of minimum rates in **OSHC** settings, including recognition of:

- Level 8 leadership roles without the title "Director"; and
- Level 6 Room Leader support for Level 7 and 8 roles where required.

Key point for services

Stage 3 is about checking compliance with minimum rates, not implementing across-the-board wage increases.

Services should:

- confirm classifications (Stage 2),
- compare current rates against the new minimums, and
- apply staged increases **only where required**, having regard to Schedule I.

Further support

For further advice, guidance materials and updates, members are encouraged to contact the Workplace Relations Team on **1300 346 818**, adminWRT@cela.org.au or adminWRS@itav.org.au

This fact sheet outlines minimum pay rates and phasing arrangements under the Children's Services Award. It is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute legal or payroll advice. Services should ensure compliance with the Award and seek independent advice where required.

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