

## **Kinder staff seek pay parity**

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KINDERGARTEN teachers in Darebin joined about 3000 others in stop-work action last Wednesday, which closed about 700 kindergartens across the state.

Kindergarten teachers were asking for pay parity for primary teachers and for kindergartens to be run by the Education Department rather than by voluntary committees answerable to the Community Services Department.

Fairfield's Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten was among at least five kindergartens in the Northcote Leader area closed for the day.

The kindergarten's director, Sue Fitzgerald, said the stop-work was not just about pay parity with primary teachers but about excessive workload for staff and voluntary committees.

Ms Fitzgerald said Victorian kindergartens relied on voluntary committees comprising parents, unlike in other states where education departments ran them.

She said the committee changed every year, creating excessive workload for directors such as herself and other staff organising them.

Ms Fitzgerald said the staffing at Alfred Nuttall Memorial Kindergarten was fairly stable. But she feared she would have difficulty finding high-quality staff if anyone left because most early childhood graduates were going into primary teaching.

She said primary school teachers could earn more than 20 per cent than what kindergarten teachers were paid. Since most kindergarten teachers were also qualified to work in primary schools they were taking the school option.

Thornbury's Clyde St Kindergarten teacher, **Carolyn Lunt**, said kindergarten teachers, like primary teachers, provided an educational experience. But kindergartens were different from primary schools because schools generally had secretaries or other infrastructure providing support.

``We are not fighting for parity with primary teachers but for recognition that we are early childhood educators providing an important learning environment," Ms Lunt said.

Community Services Minister Sherryl Garbutt said the kindergarten teachers had received a fair pay offer of 9 per cent over three years from Kindergarten Parents Victoria, which was consistent with the Government's wage policy.

Ms Garbutt said the strike action disrupted good-faith negotiations between Kindergarten Parents Victoria and the Australian Education Union, inconvenienced parents and disadvantaged children.