

MEDIA RELEASE

Union Rate Guide Does Not Define Who Is Qualified to Teach Children, Dance Arts Alliance Warns

Dance Arts Alliance (DAA) has today responded to the recent update to the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) guidance regarding teaching rates for dancers, welcoming the recognition of professional dancers while raising concerns that the guidance unintentionally conflates two distinct professions: professional performance and dance teaching.

Dance Arts Alliance has warned dance studio owners, families and policymakers not to confuse professional performance experience with the specialist qualifications and responsibilities required to teach children safely and effectively.

"Dance Arts Alliance supports fair remuneration for professional dancers and agrees that the industrial framework for dance teachers deserves review," said Melanie Gard, Chair of Dance Arts Alliance.

"Our concern is not with professional dancers being paid fairly. We strongly support remuneration that reflects the skill, dedication and professionalism of Australia's performers. Our concern is with the suggestion that performance experience, or the completion of an Intermediate level dance examination alone, can be considered equivalent to the qualifications, training and professional competencies required to teach children safely and effectively."

Teaching children is a profession in its own right. While professional dancers spend years developing exceptional performance skills, qualified dance teachers undertake specialised training in education, child development and safe teaching practices to ensure children learn in environments that are engaging, developmentally appropriate and safe.

Earlier this year, Dance Arts Alliance released its landmark report, *The Scale and Impact of Dance and Performing Arts Participation in Australia*, which found that more than **500,000 children participate in dance each week** and over **one million engage in the performing arts more broadly**. These findings demonstrate the significant responsibility entrusted to dance educators across Australia and reinforce why nationally recognised minimum standards for those teaching children are essential. Children deserve teachers who are appropriately trained not only in dance technique, but in child development, pedagogy, safe dance practice and child safeguarding. [The Scale and Impact of Dance and Performing Arts Participation in Australia](#)

Qualified dance teachers spend years undertaking specialised teacher education through tertiary institutions and other recognised organisations such as Cecchetti Ballet Australia, the

Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), Australian Teachers of Dancing (ATOD), and other recognised teacher training organisations. These pathways develop expertise in child development, pedagogy, anatomy, safe dance practice, injury prevention, lesson planning, behaviour management, inclusive teaching practices, scaffolding learning and child-centred education.

"It is simply incorrect, and deeply disrespectful to qualified dance educators, to suggest that holding an intermediate dance examination alone constitutes a teaching qualification," Gard said.

"Teaching children carries enormous responsibility. It requires far more than technical dance ability."

Dance Arts Alliance believes Australia should establish nationally recognised minimum standards for anyone working with children in dance settings.

At a minimum, DAA believes dance teachers should hold:

- A recognised dance teaching qualification through an accredited teacher training pathway.
- A current Working with Children Check.
- Current Level 2 First Aid certification.
- Demonstrated knowledge of child-safe practice and safe dance principles.

"No studio owner should feel compelled to engage someone to teach children at premium teaching rates if they do not possess the qualifications and child safety credentials required to work responsibly with young people."

DAA emphasises that professional dancers remain an invaluable part of the dance community and should continue to be welcomed into studios as guest artists, workshop presenters and mentors.

"There is enormous value in students learning from professional performers who can inspire them and share their industry experience. Those opportunities should absolutely continue and be celebrated."

"However, delivering a guest workshop or masterclass is fundamentally different from taking responsibility for the ongoing education, wellbeing and development of children through weekly teaching."

This discussion reinforces Dance Arts Alliance's long-standing call for the regulation of dance teaching in Australia.

"The absence of nationally recognised minimum standards creates confusion for employers, families and the broader community," Gard said.

"At a time when governments across Australia are strengthening child safety expectations through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and increasing community expectations around safeguarding children, it is essential that dance teaching is recognised as a specialised profession with appropriate standards."

"Children deserve teachers who are not only talented dancers, but qualified educators who understand child development, safe practice and how to create positive, inclusive learning environments."

Dance Arts Alliance remains committed to working collaboratively with MEAA, teacher training organisations, studio owners, professional dancers and governments to establish nationally consistent minimum standards for dance teachers.

"This should not be viewed as performers versus teachers," Gard said.

"Professional dancers and qualified dance teachers each play a vital role in shaping the next generation. Professional dancers inspire through their artistry and experience, while qualified teachers inspire, educate, nurture and protect children every day. By recognising the distinct expertise each profession brings, we strengthen the entire dance sector and ensure every child receives the safe, high-quality dance education they deserve."

Media Contact

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About Dance Arts Alliance:

Dance Arts Alliance (DAA) is the peak body for the dance and performing arts sector. DAA advocates for industry standards, child safety, sustainability, and professional development across recreational, educational, and full time dance education across Australia.