

# EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR CONFIDENCE 2023 SURVEY REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The OECE's annual confidence survey provides a gauge of the state of New Zealand's early childhood education sector and outlook. Each year, in the month before government releases its Budget, 1,000 people in the early childhood sector are surveyed for their opinions. This report presents the results of the latest survey.

Respondents were asked:

- If they felt government was taking things in the right direction or wrong direction for ECE.
- If they expected to see improvement or worsening in the sector in the next 12 months.
- If they had confidence in the Ministry of Education.

Teaching staff, managers, and owners were also asked to comment on how well things were going for their service or group of services.

The Labour Government has expressed many policy aspirations for early childhood education and care. However, feedback from this coalface survey tells us that the early childhood education sector is worse off compared with when Labour delivered its first Budget, and the sector is in a state of gloom without hope that things will get better soon.

### **Support for the direction Government is taking ECE**

ECE sector confidence was low in 2018 but Labour made many promises which gave the sector hope of positive changes. However, confidence in the direction that government is taking ECE has plummeted from a net negative 16 per cent in 2018 to a net negative 59 per cent this year. This year, only 13 per cent of respondents held the view that government was taking things in

the right direction for ECE compared with 72 per cent who considered it was taking things in the wrong direction. The main reasons are that government is perceived to be:

- Shrinking the quality of the ECE workforce.
- Promoting inequity between kindergartens and the rest of the sector.
- Making it harder, or impossible, to provide quality education and adequately support children.

### **The outlook for the ECE sector**

The outlook for the ECE sector in the next 12 months is not good. Just four per cent of respondents think that things will improve while 74 per cent think things will worsen for the sector. The data indicate that as well as the ECE sector not doing great, despondency has set in. For the last six years pessimism has been increasing. There is no sign yet of despondency lifting, even with an election happening this year.

### **Confidence in the Ministry of Education**

The early childhood sector does not have a lot of confidence in the Ministry of Education. Sixty-three per cent of respondents had no or a little confidence in the ministry while 32 per cent had a moderate amount. Only 5 per cent of respondents had a great deal or a lot of confidence. The ministry's competence was questioned and there seemed to be a low level of trust in the ministry.

### **What's happening in different services**

Te Kōhanga Reo whānau are feeling the cost-of-living crisis. Pay increases due to some increased funding from the government have been very welcome.

Private, corporate, and commercial ECE centres are mostly experiencing issues with revenue and staffing (finding suitable staff and retaining staff). Strong financial management is a key theme.

Playcentres are not well funded and the introduction of centralised control of revenue including funding is bringing with it some additional uncertainty and worries about centre resourcing, keeping paid staff, building and facilities maintenance.

Home-based ECE services are mostly struggling under paper-work and compliance, while managing budgets and operating well for staff, educators, and families.

Kindergartens within Free Kindergarten Associations are doing okay through funding and having supportive management structures. Staffing however is a key theme, related to such things as staff workloads, not getting rest and school holiday term breaks, and influx of children presenting with high needs.

Community-based ECE centres are mostly working on financial recovery and focused on quality. However, staffing is a key theme related to replacing any staff that may leave and whether they can afford to pay even higher wages to keep their quality teachers when they are funded less than kindergartens by government.

### **What next?**

The confidence survey results show where the greatest problems exist for the sector. Questions to ask now are:

1. Will there be anything in Budget 2023 to reverse the dire situation the ECE sector is in?
2. Can the Labour Government at least deliver on its pay parity promise before the election?
3. Seeing these issues will other political parties propose solutions going into the election?

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# THE SURVEY AND RESPONDENTS

Participation in the survey is voluntary and open to anyone in the sector. The survey is done online and was closed at 1,000 completed survey forms. The respondents represented a broad cross-section of ECE services, interests, and roles.

- Non-kindergarten education and care centres including hospital-based (private 52%; community-run 23%; total 75% of respondents)
- Kindergarten Association services (14% respondents)
- Home-based ECE (4% respondents)
- Playcentre, Kōhanga Reo, and Playgroups (4% respondents)
- Early childhood researchers, teacher educators, professional development advisors and others (3%).

Respondents were asked<sup>1</sup>:

- If they felt government was taking things in the right direction or wrong direction for ECE.
- If they expected to see improvement or worsening in the sector in the next 12 months.
- If they had confidence in the Ministry of Education.

Teaching staff, managers, and owners were also asked to comment on how well things were going for their service or group of services.

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<sup>1</sup> A further question was asked on support for dropping requirements for centre teaching staff to have undertaken recognised training in early childhood teaching. The data for this is not included here, but will be reported in another paper.

## SUPPORT FOR THE DIRECTION GOVERNMENT IS TAKING ECE

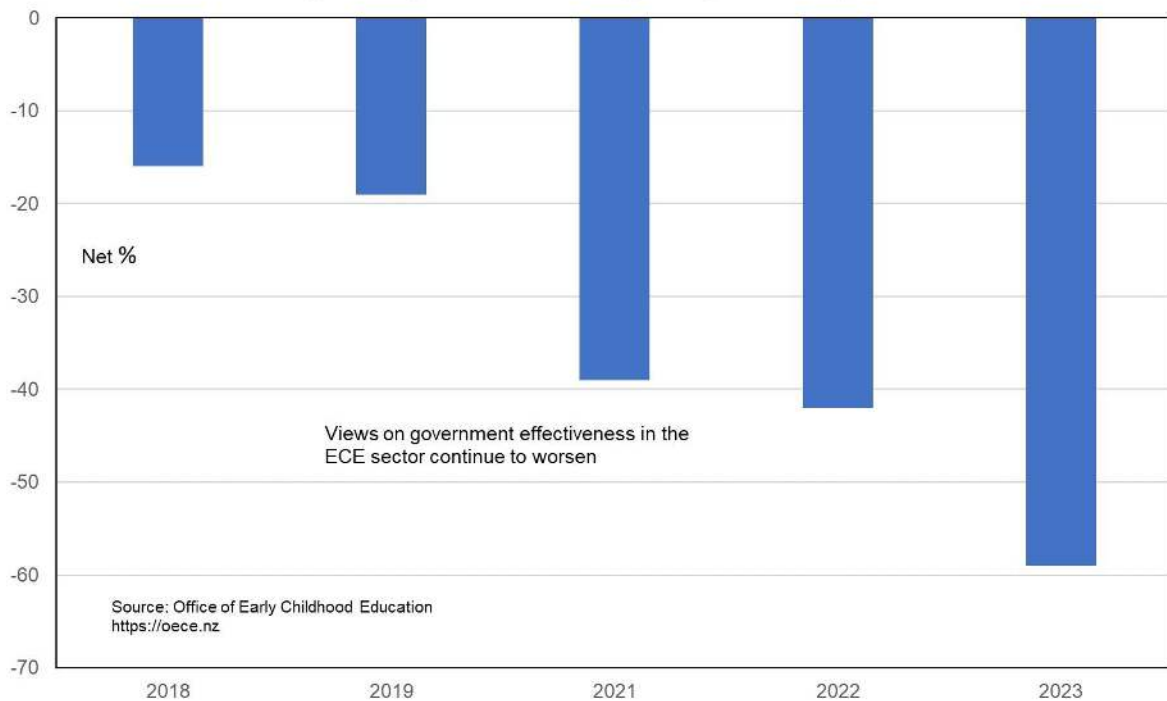
ECE sector confidence was low in 2018. However, Labour had been elected into government and had made many promises which gave the sector hope (see the Appendix at the end of this report).

But during Labour’s nearly two terms in government confidence in the direction that government is taking ECE has not improved and it has declined further. Confidence in the direction that government is taking ECE has plummeted from a net negative 16 per cent in 2018 to a net negative 59 per cent this year (see Table 1 and Graph 1). This year, only 13 per cent of respondents held the view that government was taking things in the right direction for ECE compared with 72 per cent who considered it was taking things in the wrong direction.

TABLE 1: Respondents’ views on government taking things in the right or wrong direction for early childhood education (2018 – 2023 survey results)

Year	Right direction	Wrong direction	Neutral or can’t say	Net % right direction
2018	26%	42%	32%	-16%
2019	30%	49%	21%	-19%
2021	16%	55%	29%	-39%
2022	21%	63%	16%	-42%
2023	13%	72%	15%	-59%

Graph 1: Is government taking things in the right direction?



From the comments volunteered by survey participants, three reasons stood out in analysis as to why government was not taking things in the right direction for ECE. The reasons are that government is:

- Shrinking the quality of the ECE workforce.
- Promoting inequity between kindergartens and the rest of the sector.
- Making it harder, or impossible, to provide quality education and adequately support children

## 1. Government is shrinking the quality of the ECE workforce

The diminishing quality of the ECE workforce was one of the three main reasons why respondents felt the government was not taking things in the right direction for ECE.

Services are seeing a lack of new graduates with specific training and expertise in early childhood education and care. The government has not taken effective action to get more

people into early childhood teacher training and to keep them in the ECE workforce once qualified.

The government has reduced the need for teaching staff to have specialised training and qualification in early childhood education and care. It changed regulations to allow persons who are trained as primary school teachers to supervise early childhood teachers and infants and young children in centres. This year, Labour reneged on its promise to regulate for 80 per cent ECE qualified teachers in centres.

Our past surveys have shown growing concern about staffing in the ECE sector. ECE qualified teaching staff have been leaving the sector due to low pay and poor workplace conditions, including high workloads, stress, bullying and injury. This latest survey shows that workplace conditions and pay remain a concern.

A new problem may possibly be emerging of well qualified and experienced teachers being rejected for employment because they cost more in wages than unqualified and beginning teachers. Should this problem be allowed to develop, the quality of the ECE teaching workforce will erode further.

#### **Sample of comments:**

- *With the shortage of qualified ECE staff, we have to hire whoever else is available in order to maintain the adult:child ratio.*
- *We are working with lots of inexperienced and unqualified teachers just to fill the gap of ratio, teachers who are just able to supervise but not support children's learning progress at all.*
- *With teachers leaving in droves because they are underpaid and undervalued, and there are not enough teachers currently in training (probably because they will get paid less than living wage and have a student loan), it's only going to get worse with not enough teachers or relievers.*
- *Under the current government we are not being valued or listened to, our conditions are not improving and we can't seem to retain our current workforce, or attract new teachers. 80% qualified ECE teacher policy has been dropped, what next?*
- *It's a vicious circle of poor conditions, then fewer teachers, etc.*



- *We've got two ex-primary school teachers, one is the centre manager, and two unqualified. I'm the only ECE trained teacher and as such I find myself picking up a lot of what they just don't see as necessary or know how to do properly. Every day I feel stressed. I find myself crying and not wanting to go into work.*
- *I have 12 years' teaching service but I'm not covered by pay parity extension at my centre while the relievers are given better pay, which makes me feel so gutted that my time and experience is not valued.*
- *If I leave my job I will not get employed either as a permanent staff or reliever at another centre as I am at step 11 of the pay scale and therefore not wanted as I'm too expensive to employ.*

## 2. Government is promoting inequity between kindergartens and the rest of the sector

A second main reason why government was considered to not be taking things in the right direction for ECE, was that it is showing favour toward kindergartens and kindergarten associations above the rest of the early childhood sector. One of Labour's core commitments was to deliver pay parity for early childhood teachers in its present term of government. But, while it keeps one set of funding rates and approach for kindergartens and treats other services differently, it cannot deliver on its pay parity promise.

Since the 1990s kindergartens and childcare centres have been defined in regulations as education and care centres, and kindergartens have been able to charge fees and operate to provide year-round and long-day childcare for working parents like every other centre. Any legal differences between kindergartens and other teacher-led centres disappeared. An amendment made to the Education and Training Act 2020 giving exclusive recognition to Kindergarten Associations, as part of the 'education service' has revived the traditional 2-tier ECE system where kindergarten is given public recognition and support over other services.

The government cannot deliver on pay parity until it moves to allow access for all education and care centres to the same funding rates that kindergartens get. The definition of the term

'education service' in the Act does not include all early childhood services which receive most of their revenue from the State, but government could choose to correct this.

#### Sample of comments:

- *We continue to be undermined and treated like the poor cousin to kindergartens. Until we are funded as much, things will not improve.*
- *While they talk about ECE getting pay parity, it is actually only kindergarten teachers who get it with primary.*
- *The government continues to dawdle on the issue of pay parity. ECE teachers not employed by kindergarten associations are still being discriminated against.*
- *They say 'early childhood teachers' but they don't include teachers working in education and care centres that aren't kindergartens. They need to fund everybody working in the early childhood sector the same.*
- *Our community-based centre over the last two years have had four ECE qualified teachers leave for higher paying positions: two to primary, one to kindergarten and one to another ece who could afford to offer more. Having to train our unqualifieds takes time and is sadly outweighed by the number of my qualifieds who will go to kindergarten because of the salaries.*
- *The difference in pay and working conditions between early childhood and kindergarten is insulting. There is no recognition for the important role of the visiting teacher in homebased education either.*
- *I don't understand why the government doesn't include community preschools alongside our kindergarten colleagues as we battle for better pay.*

### 3. Government is making it harder, or impossible, to provide quality education and adequately support children

Most respondents expressed that it was becoming harder, or impossible, to meet children's needs adequately and provide them with quality education. Related to this, another theme reflected in comments was that high quality services were not supported, and the government did not support services to do better than the minimum.

On the next page is a small selection of comments that show the range of concerns. The comments speak for themselves.

### Sample of comments:

- *It is becoming impossible to run a quality ECE service in NZ.*
- *Quality has gone, teaching is rare, crowd control of children is our reality.*
- *It's devastating that the government is not doing anything to even consider improving ratios.*
- *We are in crisis. We do not have enough teachers, we have a lot of tamariki with special needs and this poses a huge challenge, with tired, underpaid, under recognised teachers doing their best under the circumstances. I have worked in ECE for almost 40 years and the tamariki are coming out of our centre far less educated now.*
- *Our tamariki are not being given the education and care they deserve. Daily they have stressed teachers trying to keep their heads above water when they feel they are drowning. Health and safety are an issue with limited teachers and resources. We are working in a broken sector. My faith in the education system is fading just like so many others.*
- *We are getting more and more children with autism and behaviour needs, and do not have enough staff to provide quality care and education to both these tamariki and the whole group. Stressed kaiako every day, not being able to provide quality teaching as we would like to, ruled by filling out forms, and the basics of routines, cleaning, and never enough \$\$\$ for resources. Children want more 1:1, especially post covid, which we really struggle to provide consistently.*
- *Quality for tamariki and whanau has been decreasing e.g., catering for the needs of 2-year-olds with only a 1 - 10 ratio in our kindergarten setting does not provide for children's needs.*
- *It is disheartening to see small, quality centres shut down or being bought up by large corporations.*
- *I see early childhood services only aiming for the basics in expected standards and no more.*

## THE OUTLOOK FOR THE ECE SECTOR

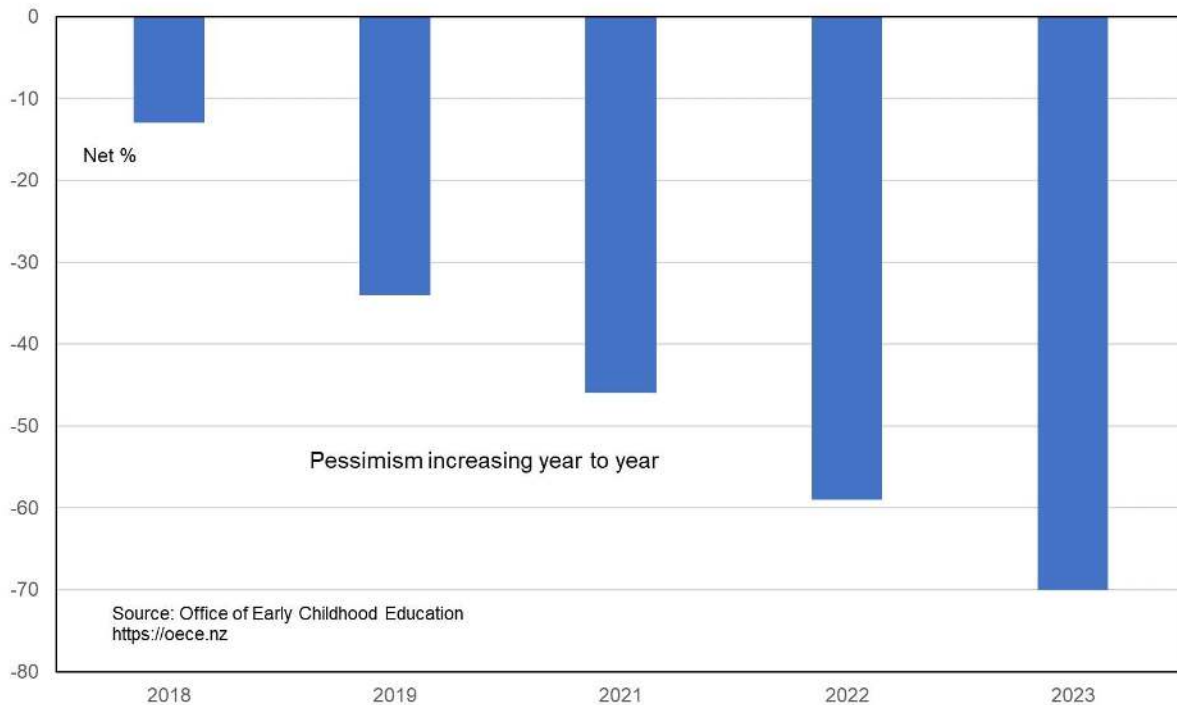
The outlook for the ECE sector in the next 12 months is not good. Just four per cent of respondents expect to see improvement while 74 per cent think things will worsen for the sector. Therefore, expectation of improvement is now at a net negative 70 per cent.

The data indicate that as well as the ECE sector not doing great, despondency has set in. For the last six years pessimism has been increasing. There is no sign yet of despondency lifting.

TABLE 2: Respondents' views on whether the early childhood sector would improve, worsen, or stay the same in the next 12 months (2018 – 2023 survey results)

Year	Improve	Worsen	Stay the same	Net % improve
2018	23%	36%	41%	-13%
2019	12%	46%	42%	-34%
2021	8%	54%	38%	-46%
2022	4%	63%	33%	-59%
2023	4%	74%	22%	-70%

**Graph 2: Net % respondents who are confident that things will improve for the ECE sector in the next 12 months**



A sample of respondents' comments are provided below that show many of the reasons for the bleak outlook.

#### Sample of comments:

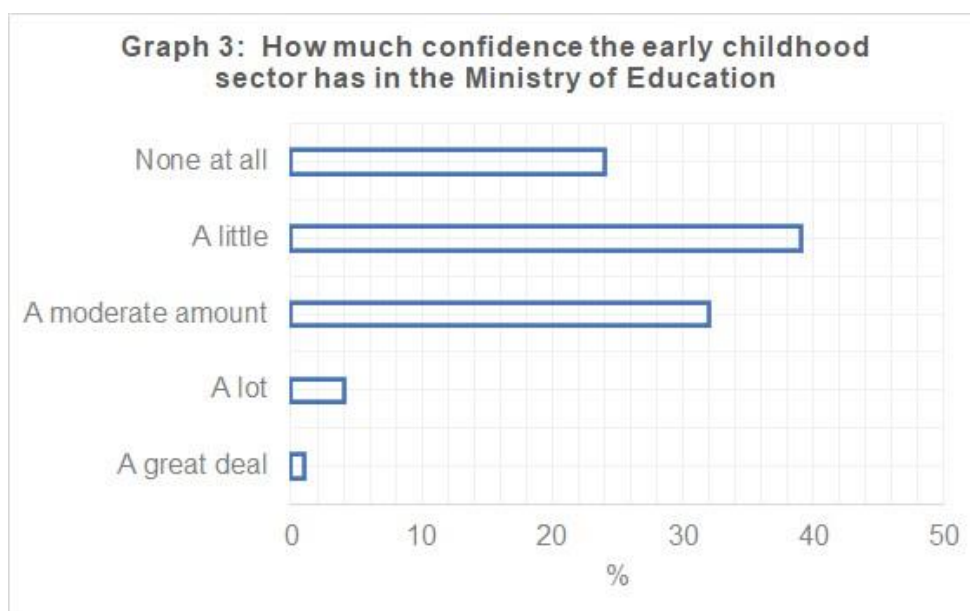
- *Every year things are getting worse. Just look at the amount of non-compliant early childhood services.*
- *We need support, and we aren't getting it.*
- *Nothing seems to be getting any better, it's all getting worse. Me and many others are on the verge of giving up.*
- *I am concerned it is going to implode. Things have to change. More funding, more equality to other fields of teaching, more respect for ECE in the teaching community.*
- *As long as we say children are a commodity to profit from (that ECE is a business for corporates and shareholders), we have got things tragically wrong.*
- *Unless ratios are improved, funding is increased and support for children with additional needs (developmental/behavioural) is addressed then can't see it getting better.*
- *We haven't seen any real progress made on implementing the early learning action plan so it will get worse based on this.*

- *I can't see the Government acting on Kindergarten and ECE being funded the same and teachers working to the same conditions. I can't see the extra responsibilities of a Centre Manager compared to Head Teacher in a kindergarten being addressed for determining pay parity. Often Centre Managers lead and manage a centre which is the same size as a small school.*
- *There is already low morale in the ECE sector. The political run up to the election is going to add to this and the insecurity of teachers, managers, and owners who are trying to keep their heads above water whilst dealing with the nonsense that continues to come from the Ministry of Education.*
- *The structure and training changes demanded by the ministry is sucking funding away from playcentres to administration and management. Parent volunteers are struggling with lack of support in overwhelming underfunded centres.*
- *There are younger children enrolling in kindergarten which increases workload. The ratios are poor. The needs of tamariki are increasing and becoming more diverse. We do not have a lot of support for additional needs.*
- *Home based is really struggling with rising costs of everything but not significant change in the funding rates.*
- *Home-based ECE settings being closed or going broke are all realities but where does it leave the families? Hard to then find new care settings, settling children, navigating new environments. How does this best support the child?*

## CONFIDENCE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education describes its purpose as being one of shaping “an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes.” It supports early childhood services “to provide quality early childhood education to all young children in New Zealand”. Among other things the ministry says on its website that it administers a range of legislative and regulatory controls, determines and delivers funding, provides services that support the governance, management and operation of education providers, and monitors and intervenes in providers that are at risk in relation to financial viability, student achievement and participation.

In this survey respondents were asked if they had confidence in the Ministry of Education and to indicate how much confidence. Sixty-three per cent of respondents had no or a little confidence in the ministry while 32 per cent had a moderate amount. Five per cent of respondents had a great deal or a lot of confidence (see Graph 3).



The early childhood sector does not have a lot of confidence in the Ministry of Education to do its job and multiple major problems are perceived as shown in the sample of comments provided below.

**Sample of comments:**

- The MoE are simply trying to get by. Their staff are tied up with disputes and non-compliance issues, and everything from the government.
- I believe MoE people are well-meaning, however the mahi seems to take place in silos - so many different workstreams rather than what we want our society to look like and how we should support all young children.
- The pay parity scheme has been actioned abysmally by the ministry. Current ratios in ECE, particularly for babies and toddlers are harmful. There is too much bureaucracy and paperwork, and not enough real support.
- The implementation of pay parity was a mess. For special needs children there is hardly any help available. Services have to mitigate all risks on their own and are made more vulnerable to failing in this environment
- Lots of talk about let's make things better, but VERY slow to act and without improvement for outcomes for children.
- Change takes too long; processes and ideas get lost in translation. Ministry workers seem frustrated at the bureaucracy too.
- They are making efforts to hear us... But now they need to act as well... Just hearing doesn't resolve the situation.
- They don't hold services accountable for not following their own MoE guidelines.

- They don't protect teachers that raise complaints against services when complaints are genuine and should be upheld.
- They only visit centres if there is an issue, rather than visiting before a centre becomes an issue.
- They've got their own problems. Too many box ticking exercises. Multiple people doing the same job under the guise of peer reviews, and re-structures at local offices leaving inexperienced people to do the work.
- They are not listening to us and our voices are not being heard. Instead of improvements being made for our profession and the tamariki we teach, we are going backwards.
- I regularly email the MoE to point out errors in documentation which are just failures to be accurate and sometimes resulting from flawed thinking.
- They constantly give the Minister poor advice and are not honest. They defend the status quo for no good reason. They do not understand the law and their need to comply with it.
- I felt bad for them earlier this year with their shocking communication around closures of ECE services with the storms.
- Sick of the misinformation that gets banded around from MoE representatives. Making up their own rules or stories to suit themselves.
- Too quick to hire curriculum leaders and such while taking away early intervention and the support that is needed, making us manage on our own and not really interested in what is happening for children and teachers. And all these lovely new roles for them in their office chairs, but no where near enough funding coming our way.
- I would have more confidence if their policies were based more firmly around current and relevant research on what is best for children aged 0-5.
- ECE is undervalued by the Ministry. They should close large profit-based centres and focus on supporting quality not business.
- The people I deal with at the Ministry are lovely and helpful, but there are too many systems and procedures which detracts from our roles as teachers and providing quality ECE.
- The Ministry has a very high turnover of staff. If their own staff are not staying then how can I have confidence in them. Plus, they are out of date with what they consider to be relevant. Put children first!!
- The fact that agencies do not communicate with each other - MoE and ERO don't seem to be on the same page.
- I think it's obvious that the MoE are consistently failing tamariki and teachers.
- I feel like I'm in an abusive relationship with the MoE. We had a wellbeing and resilience webinar which I finished feeling Gaslit, with everything is my fault and all I need to do is look at it in a positive way.
- Lots of resource and policy not really addressing what is happening at the coalface. Shifting responsibility as usual. This model is broken.



## HOW THINGS ARE IN SERVICES

To give readers further understanding of what is happening on the ground, below is a small sample of comments on how things are going within individual early childhood services. This also gives some insight into what is most on-top for different service types.

### **Te Kōhanga Reo**

- I believe our Kōhanga Reo is doing reasonably well, we have pay parity under TKR National Trust due to some increased funding from govt.
- The cost-of-living increase is affecting all whānau.

### **Private, corporate, and commercial ECE centres**

- We are stretched financially. I do a lot of work just so my staff can be paid what they deserve. I am constantly thinking of just selling up and taking on a different business.
- Interest rates for our business loan are through the roof!
- Company owners putting pressure on staff to penny pinch.
- The owner of my centre predicted wholesale closure of centres but I haven't seen it yet.
- Going through change of ownership and our owner has not paid us, dragging the change of ownership, and taking all the money to herself.
- Problem with work ethics with young and new graduates. Overseas teachers needing training in Treaty and bicultural while on the floor, and this is putting stress on existing teachers who work with them.
- Parents not paying fees, having to provide more basic care for our tamariki i.e., 3 meals a day and nappies.
- We are 100% full, due to closures of two community-based centres in our area.
- We are struggling with recruiting staff. There are too many ECE services around us and NONE of which reaches their child licensing numbers.
- We are undercutting other centres on fees to get children.

- Relief teachers are expensive and staff are burning out. Am offering 4-day weeks to keep good staff.
- We provide employment for 9 permanent staff and we operate at 100% qualified however with pay parity our funding is going on wages which means we have had to put up our fees and sit at the higher end for our area. This makes managing the roster stressful and with it being difficult to get relievers without using an agency an unreasonably expensive part of the operation. It also means that the Manager goes on the floor more than is ideal so then her job gets behind. We struggle to get our occupancy up over that 75-80% which also makes things difficult.
- The team illness is extremely worrying and it makes it hard when we have to do professional development outside of centre hours.
- Teachers, NZ teachers, those that speak English where art thou? We need you.
- No one wants to take on management roles and very few permanent staff expected to do too much.
- Have finally employed an additional teacher, now we need to increase our child numbers, but with the increased cost of living and lack of appropriate govt funding, potential families are having to toss up whether our shorter hours are enough for them to be able to afford to go back to work and put children into care.
- So many teachers have left in the past year. Changes are happening and this has resulted in unhappy parents. Children have left due to not being happy about changes.
- New company, rosters are now made to minimum staffing, if it 'works on paper' then that's what happens. Two teachers left who have not been replaced. Fees went up 25%. Parents are paying MORE for LESS now.
- We over staff to ensure full occupancy. Costs are continuing to increase and we work hard with our financial management. We are doing well because we manage our business well.
- Our team get on and are committed to learning and growing together.
- We are fortunate to have all qualified teachers and 8 teachers waiting in the wings in case an opening comes up. Our largest centre is in an affluent area so we just pass the

shortfall onto parent fees and prop up our small centre in low decile area. Both centres are full with waitlist. Teachers on higher wage steps are happy due to increase in pay.

## **Playcentre**

- We are lacking the support we need to keep running. We're about to lose our building and will have to close.
- Our own centre is doing great - we have trained parents and funds for projects to improve our building. However, higher up, for Playcentre Aotearoa a lot more is going on which is concerning.
- We now have a paid facilitator which is great but after her year is up our centre's future is looking very bleak.
- Our playcentre educators are paid far less than kindy or daycare teachers. Playcentre gets next to no funding compared with other ECE services. Playcentre Aotearoa are taking all the bulk funding and anything else in playcentre bank accounts so it can stay afloat. We'll no longer have our own money to spend on things at the centre.

## **Home-based ECE**

- I feel over-worked with continued paperwork and requirements with no extra support financially for educarers, visiting teachers and management. We have a huge waiting list for under-two children.
- We have an amazing team of educators but our small home-based business is struggling with the workload and the rising cost of living.
- There is no support from admin chasing up unpaid fees. Educators are feeling unsupported and many have few children yet our service is still advertising for more educators.
- We are always short on time as we don't have enough funding to pay staff for more hours and we keep getting hit with more and more requirements to meet from the ministry that are not simple.

- We are really struggling to take new educators on because of compliance and regulations, and we are losing people though they love teaching with us, to other non-teaching jobs where they feel less stress.

### **Free Kindergarten Association kindergartens**

- We are all fully qualified teachers so understand the needs of the children. But we are not achieving the desired outcomes for the children because we are under resourced with priority learners and toileting of the younger children.
- Out of 47 children on our roll (not all attend every day) there are 29 that need extra support. Only one of our autistic children receives 90 minutes of support during their 6-hour day. How is this quality for tamariki? Our teaching team is experienced but there are just not enough hands on board.
- Teachers are fatigued - working a full-term year (no term breaks) is not good for the children or the teachers.
- We are working our butts off, giving 100 per cent each day, but feeling we cannot respond effectively to the diverse needs of all the children attending each day. To use a sporting analogy, it's like in terms of experience and skill suggesting that the All Blacks play a test every day.
- We often don't get our 10-minute rest breaks. I often don't call in sick when I need to, due to a lack of relievers. When I have called in sick, the teaching team have been left short. My organisation is fantastic and doing the best that they can.
- We take one day at a time to be there for our whānau and tamariki so we don't feel too overwhelmed and stressed. We have reduced some of our workload so we can do this but at the detriment of learning documentation.
- We are in charge of our direction - under the umbrella of an organisation that ensures quality. We currently have a stable teaching team - a team committed to quality and ongoing learning
- We have a waiting list in our kindergarten showing that we are well valued in the community.

## Community-based ECE centres

- We have good numbers considering four children have just gone to school and we've had a good financial year. However, the feeling of an overwhelming work load is always there.
- Too much admin for a small centre of volunteers.
- Have relocated to a temporary building outside of our normal suburb following Cyclone Gabrielle. The building is old and the grounds lacking. We have had to reduce our roll by 1/3. Have gone from a staffing shortage to being over staffed.
- This is our recovery year after Covid-19, as we are slowly beginning to pick up with our occupancy/enrolment numbers.
- We operate quality ratios and are a not-for-profit operating without debt - so we manage. Staff are well supported and trained, and priority is given to upskilling the team for supporting children with additional needs .... it is still hard work though!
- Teachers are asking to be paid higher than pay parity rates - this includes provisional teachers. The moment you can't increase the rates to reliever pay rate levels - the grass looks so much greener out there.
- Constantly struggle for good quality staff, forced to make do, insufficient funding to meet better conditions of work, staff coming to work sick as we have no replacements and cannot afford \$50 an hour for an agency reliever, if indeed you can get one.
- We are still recovering financially from Covid lockdowns where we lost a significant amount of money by not being open, but paying teachers their full wages and not charging fees but not losing enough income to meet the covid wage subsidy. We have 100% qualified and certificated teachers with majority sitting in step 6+ wage bracket and our problem is that funding does not cover the wage increases. We are a community centre not for profit with 100% qualified teachers - exactly the same as a kindergarten, so why the discrimination in funding and wages?

## APPENDIX: LABOUR POLICY COMMITMENTS FOR ECE

At the time of the 2017 General Election Labour promised to:

1. Require centres to employ at least 80 per cent ECE qualified teachers by the end of the first term in government.
2. Improve group size in centres.
3. Improve teacher:child ratios for infants and toddlers.
4. Put the “free” back into the policy of 20 hours free ECE.
5. Actively support establishing new public early childhood centres in areas of low-provision through targeted establishment grants.
6. Boost support for parent-led early childhood services such as Playcentre and Kōhanga Reo, including funding to increase participation.
7. Support and lift the quality of ECE service provision, with a focus initially on providers who predominantly enrol Pacific children.
8. Investigate creating a smoother pathway from parent teacher qualifications (e.g., Playcentre qualifications) to initial teacher education programmes.
9. Develop a network of high-quality centre-based early intervention programmes addressing the needs of vulnerable children in the most deprived areas.
10. Progressively increase the level of funding provided for early intervention in ECE to better support those with identified additional needs.
11. Ensure a dedicated professional development programme is developed and implemented for ECE staff who predominantly serve Pacific kids.
12. Undertake a review of home-based, including investigating the introduction of minimum qualification levels for all home-based educators.
13. Develop a second version of Nga Huarahi Arataki – Pathways to the Future, a 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education.

The Labour government has so far carried through on promises 12 and 13. At the 2020 general election Labour promised it would deliver pay parity to all ECE teachers: “One of the core commitments that the Labour Party is making in our next term of government is extending pay parity to all teachers working in early childhood education, making sure that they are all paid what they are worth, and at the moment they’re not and that’s got to be fixed.” (Minister Hipkins’ statement made during a TVNZ interview, September 15, 2020).

