

Media Release

Kindergartens Aotearoa

30 June 2020

Kindergartens call for more funding for non-kindergarten services

Kindergartens Aotearoa, a collective representing more than half of New Zealand's kindergartens, supports funding increases for non-kindergarten early childhood education services as long as it comes with pay parity.

Private employers are saying it is unfair that kindergartens get more funding than other services, and that kindergarten teachers are generally paid more and have better employment conditions. We totally agree and support qualified early childhood teachers to be covered by a national collective agreement, just like all teachers in the school sector.

Kindergartens Aotearoa represents eight regional kindergarten associations – Auckland, Inspired Kindergartens (Tauranga) Kaitiaki Kindergartens (North Auckland), Kidsfirst Kindergartens (Canterbury Westland), Kindergarten Taranaki, Napier Kindergartens, South Otago Kindergartens and Whānau Manaaki (lower North Island).

Together, the group operates 365 kindergartens and other early learning services around New Zealand, catering for 18,500 children and employing 2,300 teaching, advisory and support staff.

Kindergartens Aotearoa spokesperson Amanda Coulston says children and families are best served by a stable qualified teaching workforce employed on professional conditions.

Below is an open letter that has gone to all our teachers, setting out our position.

For more information, contact Amanda Coulston 0292626322.

Kindergartens Aotearoa is a collective of eight regional kindergarten associations: Northern Auckland - Kaitiaki Kindergartens; Auckland; Tauranga - Inspired Kindergartens; Kindergarten Taranaki; Napier; He Whānau Manaaki; Canterbury Westland - Kidsfirst; South Otago.

Open letter on pay parity in the early childhood education sector

Kindergartens Aotearoa is a collective of eight regional kindergarten associations employing over 1,800 qualified teachers. We support pay parity for all qualified teachers in the early childhood education (ECE) sector and for it to be delivered through a national collective employment agreement.

We know that many associations and other ECE service providers, qualified teachers and educators across the country support this position.

Early childhood funding is in the news, with the Early Childhood Council representing employers in mainly profit-oriented early childhood services criticising the level of funding given to kindergartens. It asks for fairness and transparency as services deliver the same curriculum and adhere to the same regulations - we agree. The difference is qualified teachers in ECE services across the sector are employed on widely varying pay and conditions, whereas kindergarten teachers are covered by a national collective employment agreement.

Why do we have different funding?

After decades of campaigning, kindergarten teachers won pay parity with qualified teachers in primary and secondary schools in the early 2000s. Government funding to kindergarten associations reflects the fact teachers have pay parity. As part of the state sector, the kindergarten teachers' union negotiates with the Ministry of Education. Kindergarten associations as employers must meet the cost of the teachers' national collective employment agreement (KTCA) which sets out pay rates and employment conditions to support teachers' professional practice.

Teacher-led, ECE services in other parts of the sector receive government funding too, but not at the same level as kindergartens. Qualified teachers in these ECE services have varying employment arrangements and do not get the same pay and conditions.

Is it fair?

No. The Minister of Education has acknowledged this. The government increased funding in its latest budget to make sure qualified ECE teachers starting out are paid the same rate of \$49,862. Up to 17,000 teachers are expected to benefit from this. If services are already paying qualified teachers at or above this rate, there is no guarantee the extra will be put into qualified teachers' pay.

The Minister of Education says it will take successive budgets to move to parity across the sector and the Strategic Plan for Early Learning also commits to this. But it is not just about the government providing additional funding. It is about ensuring there is a mechanism in place to guarantee that funding tagged for teachers' pay and conditions is used for that purpose. Until 2011 we did have the same funding levels, but qualified teachers outside of kindergartens did not get the same pay, leave, professional development leave or non-contact time.

Where do our kindergartens stand?

A national collective employment agreement would ensure that qualified teachers receive fair pay and conditions. It would provide transparency and accountability for taxpayers' money and ensure that additional funding goes into qualified teachers' pay and conditions. *Kindergartens Aotearoa*, representing more than half of all community-based, not-for-profit free kindergartens, agrees pay parity should be sector wide and that ECE services receive the funding needed to support it. We support a national collective employment agreement for teachers - a teacher is a teacher is a teacher. We call on all other ECE employers to do the same.