

## ***Turning the tide away from a privatised, profit-focused education system***

### ***Creating an ambitious plan to move to public provision for Early Childhood Education in 5 steps***

#### **Introduction**

Our youngest citizens deserve the very best quality teaching and learning if we are to give them the foundations for success in life, uphold the mana of children and their whānau and ensure their hauora and wellbeing.

The current early childhood education sector operates on a market model, albeit funded by a large public subsidy. Over the past decade, this has led to a small number of corporate and other private players dominating service ownership (teacher-led services including kindergarten) of 54.44%<sup>1</sup> of the sector, and a steady decline in kindergarten, community and other not-for-profit services. The failings in the market model are now stark: we face a teacher shortage crisis; over-supply of services in some areas, but a lack of quality of provision in others; variable quality in provision; and a weak regulatory framework.

This 5 point plan to turn the tide away from a privatised, profit-focused education system supports the Minister of Education's Terms of Reference, and aims to provide an enduring direction for the Government's proposed 10 Year Strategic Plan for ECE.

**Our long term goal is that every child can access free quality planned public early childhood services that are community-based, locally responsive and culturally sustaining, with education facilitated by qualified teachers.**

This goal is consistent with the Government's commitment to the mana, hauora and wellbeing of children. The plan proposes legislative and regulatory actions to move to the provision of public ECE as a right for every citizen, taking the lead from the way we currently expect the compulsory schooling sector to be planned and provided.

It is grounded in the Terms of Reference of the ECE Ministerial Advisory Group which state that the government should *"...break down financial barriers by returning to the principle of a free public education that is available to all New Zealanders throughout their lives"* and *"play a more active role in the early learning market to match the supply and demand of early learning provision and limit any potential detrimental effects of competition"*.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/early-childhood-education/services>, 2017 data

<sup>2</sup> Terms of Reference, ECE 10 Year Strategic Plan – <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/consultations/Strategic-Plan-ToR.pdf>

## Our plan

The Government has set out five significant objectives<sup>3</sup> for early childhood education and outlined some of the implications for these. We endorse these objectives but argue for greater ambition and faster implementation of the key steps needed. If the Government is to meet its objectives, a bolder approach is needed so that children benefit.

To reach the Government's goal of an ECE system with learners at the centre, with barrier-free access and quality inclusive public education based on quality teaching, we recommend:

### **1. Government make a strategic decision that developing a public<sup>4</sup> system of early childhood education is in the best interests of children**

To effectively turn the tide away from a privatized, profit-focused education system, a strong position must be taken, then supported by an effective plan to implement staged change.

#### Steps:

Make this an explicit goal of the 10 year ECE strategic plan.

Seek cross-party support for including this goal in the Education Act.

Develop an integration model with appropriate legislative instruments to move services who voluntarily transition from private to public (similar to that used with special character schools in the compulsory sector -Education Act 1989, part 414, section 33).

### **2. Incentivise a shift to quality public early childhood education**

Government must back up its commitment to turn the tide away from a privatized, profit-focused education system with some clear incentives for those who are or choose to be part of a public system of provision.

---

<sup>3</sup> Learners at the centre, Quality inclusive public education, Quality Teaching, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, Barrier-free access – see Terms of Reference, ECE 10 Year Strategic Plan <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/consultations/Strategic-Plan-ToR.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Centres or services that are or become part of 'public provision' do not have returning a profit as part of their core motive.

In this definition of a public provision model, public means:

- Funded and planned by the State;
- All funding received from any source is used solely for delivering high quality teaching and learning;
- Governed by parents, with governance groups supported by local provision hubs.

There are current services/centres that would meet this definition.

### Steps:

Build momentum towards public provision by using current funding mechanisms to incentivize opting in to public provision. e.g. increase funding band for public centres with 100% qualified teachers.

Place conditions on the receipt of all public funding (across the sector) to ensure it is used solely for the purposes of delivering high quality teaching and learning.

Centrally fund salaries for services that are or who have opted into, the public provision model, delivered via collective agreements or Fair Pay agreements.

Increase the quantum of the current 20 hours free subsidy to any service joining the public system, and extend funding over time to include 2 year olds in public provision.

### **3. Planned public provision and vertical integration**

Planning provision that strengthens local communities should be the aim, as it is with the compulsory education sector.

A system devoid of planning has reinforced the competitive market approach in the ECE sector. Planned provision will ensure access for children and families to services that are where they are needed and that are responsive to local needs including cultural requirements.

Vertical integration of ECE services with schools would facilitate the transition of children along their learning journey, support professional collaboration around *Te Whāriki* and other curricula and strengthen the links across public education. It could create financial efficiencies and ease access and convenience for parents and whānau.

### Steps:

A moratorium on approval of any services establishing new centres without proven need should be introduced.

All new centres in areas of low provision should be public centres – preferably linked into a hub “enhanced” kindergarten + community services public system

All new-build schools should automatically consider the inclusion of ECE services in their design and build.

Priority for the location of new public provision for ECE should be on or adjacent to existing school sites. This is similar to the design of some Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori and Wānanga.

#### **4. Implement support mechanisms for a public education system**

Public early childhood education services, particularly those that are small stand-alone centres, will require a system of support that develops 'backroom' efficiencies and enables teaching staff to focus on providing quality education.

##### Steps:

Develop hubs comprising kindergarten and other willing community services to support the new public system by providing governance, professional and administrative backing.

Develop a pathway for profit-focused and community services to opt in to the new public system. This would include strengthening community services that are struggling, financially and administratively, and providing incentives as centres formally join the public system.

#### **5. Enhancing quality teaching**

Qualified teachers are immensely important to meet the government's educational goals and teachers are leaving the profession because of pay and conditions in unprecedented numbers, while the numbers training are inadequate for replacement, let alone workforce growth forecasts.

The public system should provide exemplary employment standards for teachers and all staff to improve quality across the sector.

##### Steps:

Fair Pay agreements for ECE should be implemented as a priority.

100% qualified teacher funding should be reinstated immediately. Resourcing for ITE needs to be strengthened so there are sufficient lecturers to work with students upgrading/new students.

Seek cross-party support, and legislate, for 100% qualified teachers by 2023.

Services opting in to public provision should be required to meet, and be funded for, the goal of 100% qualified teachers, and have exemplary working conditions codified in fair pay and collective agreements.

Gender wage injustice should be addressed by speedy settlement of pay equity claims and mandated targets to address the gender pay gap.

Pay equity settlements to become industry standards, and will be expressed via collective agreement and Fair Pay rates.

## **Making it a reality**

### *A two-year timeframe for advancing quality public early childhood education*

#### **2019 Funding for quality**

Vote Education 2019 reinstates funding for centres with 100% qualified teachers

Vote Education 2019 allocates funding to phase incentives delivering key quality public early childhood dimensions over the next 3 years

Establish new categories for funding systems to incentivise quality public early childhood education

Progress pay equity claims with employers

Develop a process and action plan to implement central funding for teachers currently in kindergarten and willing community based early childhood services, and for the phasing of this as centres/services opt in to the public system

#### **Planning for quality**

Develop policy that supports prioritisation of new centres in areas of low provision being public early childhood centres

Develop policy that supports new public centres being vertically integrated with schools

Analyse localised provision with forecasting for the next 10 years

Development of hubs, based on kindergarten and willing community providers, to support a public early childhood education system

Urgently strengthen workforce planning to:

- Progress the achievement of meeting the target for 100% qualified teachers in all teacher-led services
- Ensure and resource pathways from ITE to teaching and leadership for Māori teachers and leaders, and Pasifika teachers and leaders

#### **Legislating for quality**

Amend legislation and licensing regulations to prioritise and resource public early childhood education

#### **2020 Planning for quality**

Design of planned public provision tested, with community, sector and wider stakeholders input

### **Funding for quality**

Implement new categories for funding systems that incentivise quality public early childhood education

Progress on fair pay agreements (i.e. bargaining rules and dispute resolution processes) and ratification and enforcement of fair pay agreements

Employ a Crown negotiator process to negotiate and implement pay equity settlements for the sector

### **Legislating for quality**

Amend the Education Act to include an integration process for early childhood education centres joining the public sector

Amend the Orders In Council to include central funding for teacher salaries in public early childhood education.