



**Early Childhood  
Council**

22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019

Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Via e-mail to [chris.hipkins@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:chris.hipkins@parliament.govt.nz)

Dear Minister,

## **Proposed Kindergarten Collective Employment Agreement Settlement**

We are concerned about the proposed settlement of the above collective employment agreement, as we understand it, and appreciate the opportunity to raise our concern with you.

NZEI have issued a media statement that reports an 18.5% increase in kindergarten teacher wage rates between now and 2021. We are concerned about the impact such a significant pay increase will have on ECE teachers working in other parts of the ECE sector.

ECE teachers – be they working in Kindergartens or in education and care centres - are doing the same job. There is little difference between the role descriptions. The qualification requirements are the same. In many cases, the same staff are working part-time in both Kindergartens and centres, for significantly different pay rates.

It's a hollow gesture, not to mention inherently unfair, paying some teachers more in one part of the ECE sector when more than 70% of the ECE teachers working in the ECE sector work in education and care centres.

It penalises all those families who need to - or choose to - send their children to childcare centres – because their children's teachers will be paid considerably less than Kindergarten teachers.

It is unfair on the all the teachers who choose to work in the education and care sector – because their employers can't meet the proposed pay rates – 18.5% increase by 2021.

The disparity exacerbates an ECE Teacher shortage already at crisis point in the sector. The increase for ECE teachers working in Kindergartens, alongside the increase for teachers working in primary schools, will drive teachers away from education and care centres, particularly those centres with limited budgets and the means to compete on pay rates offered. This is particularly the case for community-owned ECE centres, which find it extremely difficult to operate and to compete in this environment.

Finally, the decision has nothing to do with the outcomes for children, and therefore the intent of the Government's Wellbeing Budget.

Minister, I'm sure there is an obligation on the government as a party to the Kindergarten Collective Employment Agreement to negotiate these rates of pay. The government also influences what teachers are paid in the education and care space, through the attestation policy for teacher wage rates. Up until 2011, the government would increase the subsidy rates payable to education and care centres whenever an increase was agreed for Kindergarten teachers. That stopped in 2011 and has not, to this point, been reinstated. Never the less, Kindergarten teachers have enjoyed three wage rate increases over the period 2011 to 2017, increasing the disparity with teachers working in education and care.

Employers in education and care centres are not free to pay their staff what they negotiate, unlike any other private sector engaged in the delivery of a public service. As previously mentioned, teacher pay rates in our sector are directly influenced by government.

My final point on this matter is to address the concern both you and previous Ministers of Education have raised. How do you know an increase in subsidy rates given to childcare centres will go to teacher wage rates? The system is already in place to ensure this happens. Increase the funding and, at the same time, increase the Ministry's teacher wage attestation rate in the ECE Funding Handbook. The Ministry already has audit functions in place to ensure any increase is allocated as desired. And publicly announcing the increase would immediately prompt any teacher in a childcare centre to complain to the Ministry if they did not receive the increase.

As is pointed out in Goal 3 of the Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning, inconsistent salaries and conditions across the sector lead to inequitable opportunities, which does not benefit children. Addressing the inherent unfairness of different pay for the same work will have a positive effect on teaching staff, parents, and their children.

As always Minister, we would be happy to discuss this concern with you in detail in an effort to work out a mutually acceptable solution. More urgently, we would appreciate a signal from you that you have taken the issues we raise regarding pay parity on board and that you are prepared to send the ECE sector a clear message that steps will be taken to ensure all ECE teachers doing the same job will be paid the same wage rate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Reynolds', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

**Peter Reynolds**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

Copied to the ECC Membership