

ADVOCACY KETE

E TŪ KAHA

INTRODUCTION

E Tū Kaha – Standing Strong for Public Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is a public good, and kindergartens are a vital part of Aotearoa’s public education system.

E Tū Kaha is a campaign to protect and strengthen high-quality, community-based early learning for tamariki and whānau.

As a collective of six regional kindergarten associations, Kindergartens Aotearoa supports over 12,000 tamariki through more than 260 not-for-profit kindergarten services nationwide, with 100% qualified teachers.

We are standing up for:

- Safe, inclusive learning environments
- Qualified, fairly paid and supported kaiako
- Strong regulation that protects quality and wellbeing
- Kindergartens remaining public, not-for-profit services

About this advocacy kete

This advocacy kete is designed to support kaiako to engage confidently and constructively in the E Tū Kaha campaign. It provides clear, practical information to help you understand what is happening, why it matters, and how you can take action in ways that feel manageable and aligned with your role.

This kete will help you understand:

- **The background** – why Kindergartens Aotearoa has launched the E Tū Kaha campaign and the policy context shaping early childhood education right now
- **The key issues** – what is at stake for tamariki, kaiako, whānau and communities, and what we are advocating for
- **Your role** – the actions we invite you to consider, from learning and sharing information, to engaging with MPs and supporting collective advocacy

You do not need to be a policy expert or political insider to take part. Small actions, taken together, make a meaningful difference.

BACKGROUND

The government has reviewed regulations, dropped many licensing criteria, recommended reductions in the level of teacher qualifications and is considering changes to the curriculum and funding. The key issue is that these undermine the provision of high-quality

Early Childhood Education and put the survival of Kindergarten at risk.

These factors are all interconnected and each of them and particularly in combination with each other, put tamariki/mokopuna at significant risk.



THE KEY ISSUES FOR HIGH QUALITY ECE:

Teacher Qualifications

- Proposal to reduce the level of qualification of teachers in ECE i.e. not degree level.
- The current level of qualification connects teachers across all sectors of education
- International research shows that degree level of qualification to teach is essential for High quality ECE

Te Whāriki/ ECE curriculum

- Testing children and linking it to funding
- Te Whāriki changes from socio-cultural to teacher directed learning
- Move from Socially constructed learning Structured learning
- Less culturally responsive learning

Parent and whānau involvement

- Language culture and identity not protected
- No need for a philosophy let alone with whānau engagement
- Reduced commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Pay and working conditions

- Pay Parity is at risk
- ECE Pay Equity Claim has been halted and needs to be started from scratch
- Active destabilisation of unions and negotiation processes.

Legislation/ Regulations/ Licensing Criteria.

- ECE as a response to enable the labour market over ECE as a public good and children's right to access it
- Potentially less focus on education and more on regulation with the establishment of a Directory of ECE Regulation
- Less transparency
- Erodes the Te Tiriti o Waitangi and culturally grounded practices.
- Focus on the market and relieving 'regulatory burden' that has not been asked for by the wider sector.

Funding

- There is a funding review happening currently and we are concerned that there will be a cut to Kindergarten funding that will be distributed across the rest of the sector.
- This could lead to higher parent fees which impacts on the accessibility to ECE for all children.
- We are concerned that the Funding Review underway will recommend significant cuts to kindergarten funding.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Issue:

The Ministry for Regulation has suggested that the definition of a qualification be changed – to reduce the requirements for ECE.

They suggested:

- Allowing vocational ECE qualifications to count such as childcare certificates, nanny qualifications etc. Allowing more than one person studying to count as qualified
- Allowing teachers to 'qualify by experience', so they count towards qualified teacher requirements from experience working with children. (Imagine if you could become a surgeon by years working in a hospital.)

We currently have a level seven teaching qualification, to become an early childhood teacher, either a degree or graduate diploma.

- Research shows this level of qualification is essential for high quality ECE
- It connects teachers across all sectors and includes ECE as a crucial part of the education sector with teachers in primary and secondary schools
- The current level of qualification connects teachers across all sectors education
- International research shows that degree level of qualification to teach is essential for High quality ECE
- International studies show quality early childhood education potentially accelerates children's literacy up to a year

Action

You are invited to:

- Display your teacher qualifications prominently in your kindergarten. This could be in frames.
- Include in a display explaining the importance of degree level qualifications.

TE WHĀRIKI/ THE ECE CURRICULUM

Issue:

They suggest:

- Advocates have been lobbying Government to change Te Whāriki to a teacher-directed approach that “ensures children are taught oral and symbolic (alphabetical and numerical) foundations needed for primary school”. (Prof Elizabeth Rata, email to Erica Stanford).
- This could result in testing of 3 and 4 year olds.
- This can already be seen in the schooling sector as The Government has introduced a Science of Learning approach to schooling that focuses on content knowledge and skills development this is a change from our current child led approach.
- This involves what the Government calls a Knowledge Rich Curriculum with the introduction of Structured Maths and Structured Literacy programmes.

Action:

You are invited to:

1. Post on your Facebook page and in Story Park every week examples of high-quality learning in action (assign or roster team members to post to ensure it happens at least every two weeks).
2. Display examples of the literacy and numeracy that is occurring– use language such as “Tamariki develop their numeracy skills by ...”
3. Make a display about Te Whāriki showing how the curriculum fosters learning.

PARENT AND WHĀNAU INVOLVEMENT

Issue:

- There have been a number of changes to Government Policy that directly negatively impact Māori including limiting the use of te reo Māori.
- Removal of programmes for Pasific Communities
- Research clearly shows that parent and whānau involvement in their children's learning leads to positive outcomes for tamariki.

Proposal:

- Language culture and identity not protected
- No need for a philosophy let alone with whānau engagement

PAY PARITY

Issue:

Pay parity provides teachers with equivalent qualifications and experience to be paid the same, regardless of the age of the tamariki they work with.

- The Kindergarten Teachers Collective Agreement (KTCA) has provided pay parity for kindergarten teachers with teachers in schools for around 20 years, and the wider ECE sector is working towards parity with the KTCA. However, the Minister David Seymour, does not support pay parity and has made changes that undermine pay parity in the wider ECE sector.

Pay Equity

- The pay equity claim for ECE teachers has been scrapped.

Action:

You are invited to:

1. Kindergarten teachers can support pay parity action in the wider education sector

LICENSING CRITERIA/ REGULATIONS/ LEGISLATIONS

Issue:

We're concerned that changes to the licensing criteria, the regulations, and the Education and Training Act will undermine safety and quality for tamariki, Whānau and staff.

Legislation

- The Education and Training (Early Childhood Reform) Amendment Bill was introduced to Parliament in July 2025 to address issues that came out of the Regulatory Review.
 - The Bill changes the purpose of ECE regulation to emphasise labour market participation over children's participation.
 - The Bill establishes a Director of ECE Regulation that could result in inconsistent standards and reduce the focus on education.
 - The Bill further erodes the Te Tiriti o Waitangi by marginalising Māori voices and undermining mana-enhancing culturally grounded practices.
- The cut to school boards obligation "to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi" is likely to push down to ECE

Regulations

Changes have been recommended to the ECE regulations that focus on "the regulatory impacts on market function, compliance costs for providers, and position regulation as safeguarding and ensuring good education of children and supporting parent choice".

There is no mention of high quality, and the focus is predominantly on making things easier for providers and business.

The Associate Minister for Education has said the review that quality will be compromised for the sake of cost savingsNeed the quote here

Licensing Criteria

Proposed changes to the Licensing Criteria again focus on make life easier for providers rather than providing high quality, safe ECE for tamariki.

Action:

You are invited to:

Share information with parents and whānau as announcements are made around the confirmed changes to legislation, regulations, and the licensing criteria.

We will circulate media releases and social media posts that explain any confirmed changes, and you are encouraged to share them with your parents and whānau.

FUNDING

Issue:

We are concerned that the Funding Advisory Group will recommend the additional funding kindergartens get distributed across all centres, cutting kindergarten funding.

Proposal:

- We are concerned that the Funding Review underway will recommend significant cuts to kindergarten funding.
- Kindergarten Associations currently receive higher base funding than the rest of the centre-based ECE sector because of the need to meet the costs of the Kindergarten Teachers Collective Agreement (KTCA).
- This would make it impossible to fund the cost of delivering the KTCA.

ECE Base Funding Rates		
	Kn Per Hour	All day Per Hour
Under 2s	\$20.27	\$15.87
2 YO	\$11.58	\$9.21
20 ECE	\$18.55	\$15.41

Action:

- Ask whānau to write to your local MP and explain what the impact of increased fees may have on them