

# Seven in 10 childcare centres forced to hike fees, others cut staff pay<sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Qualified early childhood teachers are taking pay-cuts to keep their childcare centres open amid a mounting funding crisis.

The government policy of 20 hours' free early childhood education has become a pipe-dream – there are few parents who can get it. Instead, one in six centres say they have cut staff pay, while asking them to continue juggling the same workload.

Parents say they are concerned about the quality of teaching their children are getting, and the conditions teachers are working in.

But this weekend, education minister Hekia Parata insisted childcare had got a third more affordable over the past 10 years.

A survey carried out by the New Zealand Educational Institute shows 89 percent of services have experienced a shortfall in Government funding in the past five years.

Of the 264 centres that responded, 70 percent had increased parent fees as a direct result of that shortfall, and 41 percent said they'd cut qualified staff for cheaper, unqualified staff.

Sixteen percent had cut staff pay rates, or were planning to, and 48 percent of respondents said curriculum delivery was not happening at the full level.

At Johnsonville West, four fully qualified kindergarten teachers had agreed to have their hours cut from full time to 0.85 as part of a restructure under the umbrella organisation Wellington Kindergartens, head teacher Jo Young said.

That meant a cut in hours they were paid to work, but the exact same workload.

"They do full-time work," Young said, "we want to provide high quality education, and make sure there's consistency. Teachers have worked overtime to make sure there's no cracks."

The kindergarten also had to fundraise "for everything".

"If we didn't fundraise we wouldn't have paint for the children, we wouldn't have resources. We're lucky we've got families selling raffle tickets."

Parents did not realise staff were working under tighter conditions, because staff had managed to retain the kindergarten's "status quo".

Teacher Mandy Godfrey loved working at the kindergarten: she did not get into early childhood teaching for the money, she said, but for her love of children.

The transition to working 34 hours had been difficult, as had the 15 percent decrease in salary.

There had not been a change to the quality of the service, but staff were picking up extra jobs like cleaning and maintenance, parent and kindergarten committee member Sarah Bolten said.

"I think parents would be really surprised to know the funding we get and how we have to make that stretch for resources and the facilities."

The kindergarten had no plans to raise its fees, but if it was forced to it would mean parents already helping with donations and fundraising would be further stretched.

Early Childhood Council chief executive Peter Reynolds said all ECE services were suffering for a lack in funding, but he didn't believe as many as NZEI was suggesting had dropped the quality of their staff.

Across New Zealand's 2500 licensed childcare centres the vast majority had 80 percent qualified staff, Reynolds said.

Education Minister Hekia Parata said there were 25,500 staff working in early childhood services across the country, around 74.6 percent of whom were qualified, an increase from 61 percent in 2008.

Funding for ECE had more than doubled since 2007/2008, and per-child funding in New Zealand was among the highest in the OECD.

"Our Government is absolutely committed to our youngest New Zealanders getting the best possible start to their education by participating in ECE. We are backing up that commitment by more than doubling funding for ECE, making it more affordable for parents and setting ambitious targets for participation."

Parata said ECE was 33.1 per cent more affordable now for parents and families, than in June 2007.

Services were independently monitored by the Education Review Office to ensure they were providing the high quality education and care kids deserved.

-reprinted from Stuff

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** childcare workforce <sup>[4]</sup>

fees <sup>[5]</sup>

pay <sup>[6]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/11/seven-10-childcare-centres-forced-hike-fees-others-cut-staff-pay> <sup>[2]</sup>

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