

New Zealand: National targets 'arrogant and reckless' early childhood plans ^[1]

The National Party's early childhood spokeswoman Nicola Willis has attacked the government's plans to make more early childhood centres non-profit.

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The government has said it wants to turn the tide away from privatised education and could intervene to manage supply and demand for early education.

The government's move away from privatisation were signalled in documents related to development of an Early Learning Strategic Plan.

"This involves turning the tide away from a privatised, profit-focused education system. In the context of early learning, this includes working to ensure that community-based early childhood education services have well-maintained facilities and are able to expand to meet growing demand," the plan's terms of reference said.

In a related Cabinet paper, Education Minister Chris Hipkins said the private sector had grown from owning 28 percent of all early childhood services in 2002 to 46 percent in 2016.

However, Ms Willis said parents valued the choice provided by the private sector.

"The reason these centres have grown is because parents have chosen them.

"The sector hasn't grown from 28 to 46 percent because parents don't like the quality of care provided - so to suggest that Chris Hipkins can step in and do a better job than those providers of deciding what families need is arrogant and reckless."

Ms Willis said there was no evidence that there were too many early childhood centres.

However, Early Childhood New Zealand backed the government's plans, with chief executive Kathy Wolfe saying community-based services needed more government assistance to keep up with the private sector.

"There's some amazing community-based early learning services out there who have put their heart and soul into the delivery of early learning to our tamariki and it's definitely about time that this gets addressed."

Ms Wolfe said restoring higher subsidy rates for services where all teachers were qualified and registered would be a big help for non-profit services.

-reprinted from RadioNZ

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