

When will Ministry act on early childhood teacher shortage? ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

With the first term of this school year about to begin, there have been several news stories on the teacher recruitment challenges that schools are facing. What these articles forget to mention are the similar challenges being faced by early childhood education services and centres.

Te Rito Maioha estimates that New Zealand is short of about 300- qualified early childhood education teachers each year, based solely on people leaving the profession.

We have no reason to believe that the situation is any different this year and yet the government and officials seem to glance over the evidence.

We were very disappointed by what the Ministry of Education had to say about the shortage of early childhood teachers when they appeared before the Education and Workforce [Select] Committee on 19 December 2018.

A Ministry official initially said they 'have very little information on the early childhood workforce' (Uncorrected Transcript: 2017/18 Annual Review of the Ministry of Education). However, later in the Ministry's appearance, they acknowledged that numbers on their Education Counts website showed a reduction in the proportion of qualified staff working in early childhood centres.

When questioned further, another Ministry official said, 'decisions have not finally been taken' in response to the question, 'What work is the Ministry undertaking to increase the supply of qualified teachers to meet the Government's stated policy goals around the proportion of qualified teachers in early childhood?'.

For Te Rito Maioha and its members, this is not good enough and we sincerely hope that the Education and Workforce Committee is not satisfied by the Ministry's response either.

On my reading, it seems the Ministry has little appetite to make provision for the early childhood education workforce, despite repeated assurances that we are an important part of the education system.

Te Rito Maioha is part of an Education Workforce Strategy early childhood education working group. We are concerned that work is not progressing at anything like the pace needed to effect change in a timely way, for neither the early learning nor schooling sector.

Early childhood sector representatives, with whom the Ministry is 'working closely', are growing ever more frustrated by the Ministry's inaccurate claims there is insufficient data on the early learning workforce.

We are confident that the information needed to make sensible decisions exists. Where there are gaps, the working group has for the past year offered to help with additional information gathering.

Enough talk! When will the Ministry take decisive action?

-Qualified early childhood education teacher shortage: Te Rito Maioha estimate

- There are approximately 30,000 early childhood teachers in New Zealand of which approximately 20,500 are registered (2017 Education Counts, Ministry of Education figures).

- There is an annual attrition rate of about 4%. That is, about 1200 early childhood teachers leave the profession each year, of which around 800 are qualified.

- Tertiary Education Commission Ngā Kete figures show there were approximately 2000 Equivalent Fulltime Students enrolled in early childhood degrees in 2017.

- Estimating that one-third of these are in year three with a 75% qualification completion rate, about 500 of these people will graduate in any one year (Te Rito Maioha graduates about 200 people a year).

- This means that on attrition alone, New Zealand is more than 300 qualified teachers short each year.

- This figure does that not take into account the number of new teachers needed to cater for the growth in children entering early childhood education and care.

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Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/02/when-will-ministry-act-early-childhood-teacher-shortage>

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