

Childcare centres brace for less money as cuts hit home ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Funding cuts are a reality for around 2000 early childhood centres this week.

The Government has cut nearly \$300 million from its budget by removing the top two funding rates for centres with more than 80 per cent of fully qualified teachers.

The cuts don't take place until February but centres are funded quarterly so the November payments being issued this week will be the first to include the new rates.

Until now many centres have only been able to speculate what the cuts would mean for their budgets.

"Today the reality of the government cuts will hit home as kindergartens and centres see their reduced funding coming through," said NZ Education Institute vice-president Judith Nowotarski.

A parent and early childhood teacher bungy-jumped from the Harbour Bridge yesterday morning in a show of protest. Korncarl Marsters said he wanted to show support for his daughters' centre which was having to stop a number of extra activities, such as gym and swimming, as a result of the funding cuts.

Around 2000 centres are expected to be affected by the funding cuts. Many plan to pass the costs onto the parents of 93,000 children or make staff redundant.

"Everyone has been working to figure out how they will survive on less funding and many services will be increasing parent fees from today to cover the shortfall," said Ms Nowotarski. A recent survey by the NZ Childcare Association showed that more than 70 per cent of the centres surveyed said they would increase fees by between \$10-50 a week per child.

Sixty per cent said they expected participation levels to drop as a result.

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funding ^[4]

staff ^[5]

outcomes ^[6]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/11/childcare-centres-brace-less-money-cuts-hit-home> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/australia-and-new-zealand> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/budget> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/staff> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/outcomes>