

# Childcare changes would cost parents - Govt <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS.

Parents would end up footing the bill for many of the recommended changes in a Children's Commissioner report on pre-primary care, the Government says.

Children's Commissioner John Angus said today a review by his office had found the quality of care provided for children aged younger than two years was variable.

He recommended a number of changes including reducing the number of under-twos in one group, increasing the ratio of staff per child and placing more emphasis on the specific knowledge and skills needed to work with this age group.

He also called for better funding support for parents who chose to stay at home to look after their infants.

Education Minister Anne Tolley said she welcomed the opportunity to hear from the sector.

"But I note that many of the recommendations will involve increasing costs for services, and, ultimately, for parents," she said.

"The independent ECE (early childhood education) Taskforce has already been briefed on the findings of the report.

The taskforce will consider these suggestions before making its final report available to me."

A number of groups, including NZ Childcare Association (NZCA) and teachers' union New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI), welcomed the report, saying it highlighted the need for change in the sector.

NZCA chief executive Nancy Bell said the report was timely given recent changes to early childhood education (ECE) licensing requirements and potential increases to group sizes for under-twos.

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Unfortunately, the regulated minimum standards in New Zealand were low, with the regulated adult to child ratios set at one adult to five under-two-year-olds, with only 50 percent of teachers at any service required to hold a qualification, Ms Bell said.

"In practice, this means that many under-twos do not receive the care of a qualified teacher."

NZEI national executive member Hayley Whitaker said the report reinforced the call all early childhood teachers to be fully qualified.

"It stresses the importance of providing quality early childhood education by a skilled and knowledgeable workforce."

Labour Party deputy leader Annette King said the report drew attention to the importance of getting children off to a good start in life.

"Tilting resources towards all children's development in their early years is vital for New Zealand to ensure as many of our children remain free from harm and are able to live the best lives they can when they become adults," she said.

"The Government needs to take a close look at this report if wants to be taken seriously when it talks about its determination to do something about issues such as child abuse."

-reprinted from NZ Herald

**Related link:** New Zealand Children's Commissioner's report <sup>[2]</sup>

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

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