



Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa  
**NZ Childcare Association**

## 2011 election manifesto

# An agenda for quality early childhood education

The voice for quality early childhood education  
at the 2011 General Election

### Contents

|                |   |   |   |  |   |                         |    |
|----------------|---|---|---|--|---|-------------------------|----|
| Our position   | 2 | Why the sector should be interested in politics | 4 | What has happened since last election? | 5 | How can I get involved? | 7  |
| Our priorities | 3 |   |   |  |   | Major parties           | 8  |
|                |   |   |   |  |   | Minor parties           | 10 |





**Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association (NZCA) wants every child to have the best start in life through access to high quality early childhood education (ECE). Having a world-class ECE system is critical to ensuring New Zealand's social and economic future.**

The general election is approaching and it is time to release our manifesto, '*An agenda for quality early childhood education*'. We are calling upon all parties from across the political spectrum to make a pledge to the very best future for our children.

'*An agenda for quality early childhood education*' asks for a commitment from all political parties to adopt our manifesto priorities.

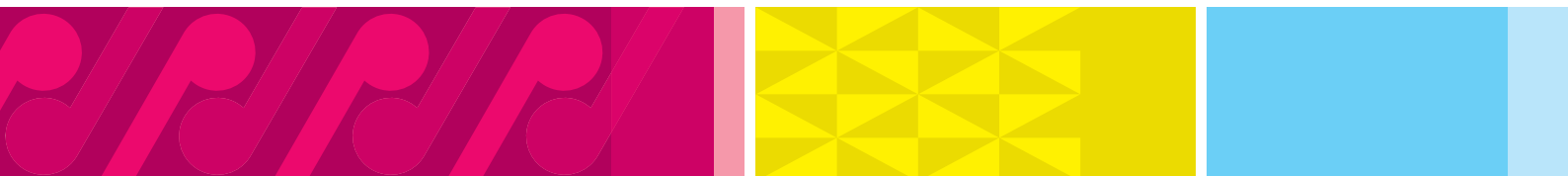
As a member of NZCA, you will share our values and now we need your support to communicate our commitments.

This manifesto includes an overview of the ECE policies of all the major parties, so you can see if their policies support our vision of high quality ECE. One of the most important things you can do is get involved. Try writing to your local MP, write to an ECE spokesperson, invite an MP to your centre or simply send an email. Above all else, don't forget to cast your vote.

Together we can make sure high quality ECE is on the agenda.

Nāku iti nei, nā

**Judy Kaa** | National President



# Our priorities

Our manifesto asks all political parties to deliver the following early childhood education (ECE) policies. We believe these policies are critical to ensuring a great future for every young New Zealander.

Our priorities for the general election are:

- Commitment to regulating the 80% qualified teacher target as the next step towards a 100% qualified teaching workforce in the future in all teacher led services. Our members place a 100% qualified teaching workforce as their highest priority, but this must be supported by adequate government funding.
- Improving teacher-child ratios for children aged two and under. By international standards, our teacher:child ratios for under two year olds are poor. Research shows that the long-term impact of ECE is greatest on under three year olds and it must be of high quality. We would like to see the regulated ratio for children two years and under reduced initially to 1–4 and eventually to 1–3.
- Providing universal access to high quality ECE for three and four year olds with a minimum of 20 hours no-cost ECE for all. This requires a robust funding regime and greater planning of ECE services with active intervention where there are insufficient places in a community.
- Working towards funding pay parity for all ECE teachers so that teachers who have the same qualifications and do the same work are paid the same.

As an association, we represent the views of our members. Members of NZCA were surveyed about the issues they thought affected them the most. Our members are at the frontline of ECE teaching and their views are shaped by their experience as employers, managers and teachers. Our members want to offer the highest possible standard of ECE for all children in New Zealand.

# Why the sector should be interested in politics

## Early childhood education is always political.

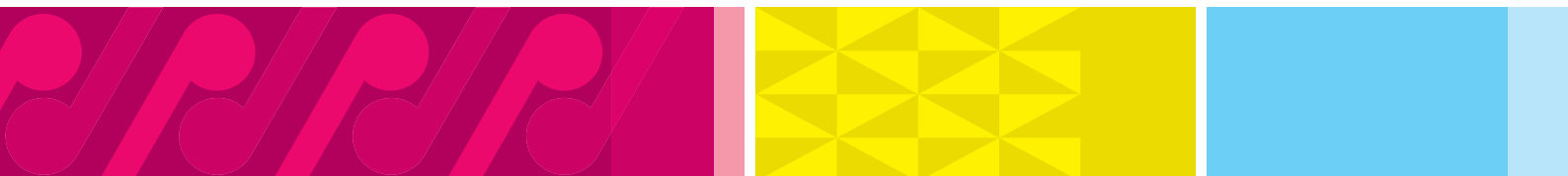
Over 80% of ECE centre funding comes from government. Because it is non-compulsory, there are always debates about how much government should contribute to early childhood education (ECE) and how this funding should be distributed. Government currently spends \$1.3 billion per annum on ECE for around 180,000 children.

There is now strong consensus that high quality ECE is an excellent investment for government because of the difference it makes to the life trajectories of children. International studies show returns of 16:1 for every dollar spent in ECE, in terms of children's later achievements. Aside from the investment arguments, there is the view that access to high quality ECE should be the right of every child as a citizen.

In New Zealand, 95% of five year olds starting school have attended an ECE service. This is a high proportion by international standards but there is still concern about the children who are missing out. This concern has led to a focus on lifting participation particularly amongst lower socio-economic communities, Māori and Pasifika.

High quality ECE is where children regularly engage in sustained learning conversations with their teachers and peers. Research evidence shows that these conversations are more likely to occur where teachers are qualified and undertake regular professional development, where there are favourable teacher-child-ratios and small group sizes. High-quality ECE requires considerable government investment, as most parents cannot afford to pay the full costs themselves. As well as providing funding, government has an important regulatory role, to ensure that ECE services meet agreed standards.

In New Zealand, there have been many changes to ECE policy in the past decade. In 2002, a strategic plan was launched with a focus on improving the quality of ECE and increasing children's participation. From 2002 to 2008, teacher qualification levels rose rapidly as government implemented qualification requirements and funding incentives. In 2007, the policy of 20 fully funded hours for three and four year olds (20 hours free) was implemented.



# What has happened since the last election?

The current government, elected 2008, made a series of policy changes within the ECE sector.

## 20 hours ECE

One of the first changes made by the current government was to drop the word 'free' from the '20 hours free' ECE policy. This move signalled that government saw parent contributions as vital to providing ECE in the future.

The renamed '20 hours ECE' was also extended to parent and whānau-led services, Playcentre and Te Kohanga Reo.

## Funding and qualification changes

Budget 2010 saw the government make significant reductions to the funding for teacher-led ECE services. These changes removed the 100% qualified teacher band along with the 80–99% qualified teacher funding band. These were replaced by a new 80%+ band resulting in 5–14% funding cuts across approximately two thirds of all ECE services.

These changes were made by government to offset the increasing spend on ECE as higher numbers of children enrolled for longer hours, but were consistent also with the government's view that the target of 100% qualified teachers was unnecessary.

The current requirement is 50%. Government has expressed support for regulating 80% in 2012 but this is yet to become policy.

The result of the funding cuts was that most services reluctantly raised parents' fees and made changes to the way they operated, including cutting the number of qualified teachers and increasing the ratios of children to teachers.

## Changes to regulations

Regulations set out the minimum standards ECE services must maintain in order to be licensed. The current government wanted to reduce compliance and has removed some regulations including:

- increasing the maximum number of children on one licence on one site from 50 to 150 children
- removing the licensing requirements for Limited Attendance Centres (eg gym creches), in order for them to operate without having to meet the minimum standards required for licensed early childhood education centres.

These changes have had mixed responses in the sector because there is concern that quality may fall as a result, impacting negatively on children.

## ECE Taskforce report

The biggest event in the ECE political calendar since the last election was the government's appointments of a taskforce to review public investment in early childhood education. The taskforce was required to work within the constraints of the government's existing budget, with any new initiatives to be funded through reprioritisation of existing funds.

The final report, *'An agenda for amazing children'* affirms the value of ECE and the need for it to be of high quality. It argues that government should invest more when possible, particularly to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The report details 65 recommendations for changing the current early childhood education system. These include recommendations to lift the quality of ECE such as:

- regulating the 80% qualified teacher target
- improving the teacher-child ratios for under two year olds
- reinstating higher funding for services which have 100% qualified teachers.

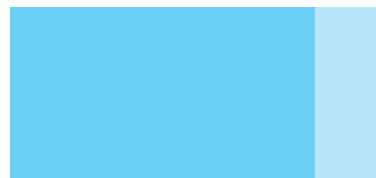
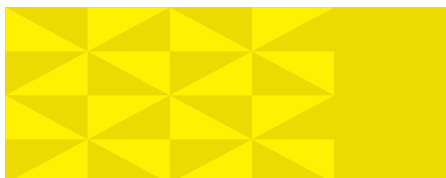
These recommendations are welcomed by the sector.

There are other recommendations which are more controversial:

- a total overhaul of the current funding model
- 20 hours ECE to become 20 hours subsidised ECE (named 'core funding') with additional funding targeted to 'priority' children
- improved performance reporting, including reports on children's learning.

The government has received almost 4,000 submissions on the taskforce report and has recently announced:

- three sector advisory groups – practice improvement for low quality services, ECE for under twos and transition to school
- a national evaluation of Te Whāriki
- web-based tools to help parents select an ECE service
- a new funding system.



# How can I get involved?

If you think that high quality early childhood education (ECE) is important, then there are many ways you can get involved.

## Write to your MP

Write a letter, or send an email outlining the ECE issues you really care about and why their party should put this at the top of their agenda. Tell them your vote counts.

A list of MPs can be found on [www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/HvYrSay/](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/HvYrSay/) or you can call the parliamentary information service on 04 471 6947 for the contact details for any MP.

## Send a letter to an ECE spokesperson

Political party spokespersons' names and contact details are located on the party policy pages. Write them a letter or send them an email, we've included some questions to get you started.

## Invite an MP to your centre

One of the best ways to debate the issues is face-to-face. MPs are usually very open to visiting centres and meeting with their electorate. So why not drop them a line and ask them to come by for a visit and photo opportunity. Then you can help make our voice heard directly. Keep a copy handy of any questions you want to ask.

## Vote

Don't forget to vote. This is the most important thing you can do. Decide for yourself which party policies are the best for our sector and cast your vote. If you are unsure of how to vote, or whether you are registered contact Elections New Zealand on 0800 ENROL NOW or visit [www.elections.org.nz](http://www.elections.org.nz)

**Let's ensure high quality ECE is on the agenda.**

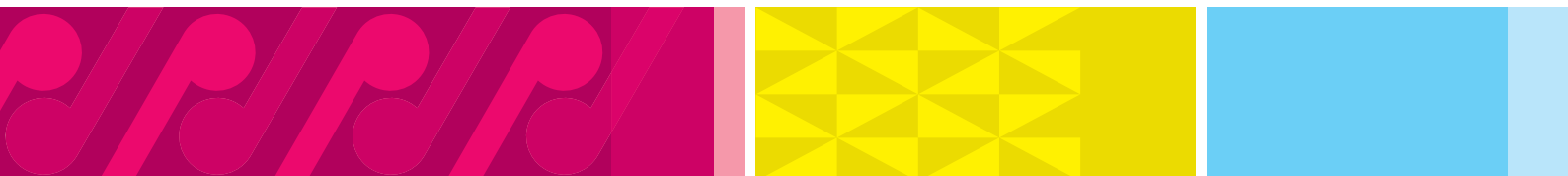
# Major parties

## National Party

|                       |                           |  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <b>WHO TO CONTACT</b> | <b>Hon Anne Tolley MP</b> | <a href="mailto:anne.tolley@national.org.nz">anne.tolley@national.org.nz</a> |
|                       | Minister of Education     | <a href="http://www.national.org.nz">www.national.org.nz</a>                 |

### Policy highlights

- Protect 20 Hours ECE and fee controls for the next 3 years
- Provide better information for parents
- Increase participation for those children currently missing out, especially Māori, Pasifika and less well-off families
- Maintain a diverse and high quality ECE sector
- Raise the number of qualified teachers in teacher-led services from 67 to 80 per cent by next year.



# Labour Party

|                       |                    |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--|
| <b>WHO TO CONTACT</b> | <b>Sue Moroney</b> | <a href="mailto:sue.moroney@parliament.govt.nz">sue.moroney@parliament.govt.nz</a> |
|                       | ECE spokesperson   | <a href="http://www.ourownfuture.co.nz">www.ourownfuture.co.nz</a>                 |

## Policy highlights

- Child centred approach to public policy 'Putting children first'
- Restore 100% qualified teacher target
- Restore previous government funding levels to ECE services
- Increased investment in early years and ECE.

# Minor parties

## Māori Party

### WHO TO CONTACT

**Te Uroora Flavell**

Education spokesperson

[mpwaiariki@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:mpwaiariki@parliament.govt.nz)

[www.maoriparty.org](http://www.maoriparty.org)

### Policy highlights

- Improve access to ECE
- Compulsory and free ECE from four years of age.
- A shift in the emphasis of investment towards children and early childhood education, including lower adult:child ratios.
- Increase the supply of quality early childhood care and education services in low-income areas.
- Strengthen the delivery partnership with the Kohanga Reo National Trust.
- Literacy and numeracy services to parents trying to teach children to read, write and count.

## Greens

### WHO TO CONTACT

**Catherine Delahunty**

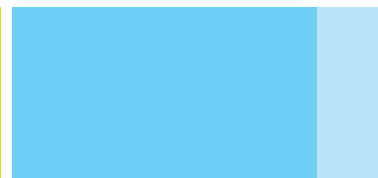
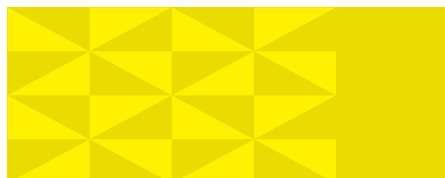
Education spokesperson

[catherine.delahunty@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:catherine.delahunty@parliament.govt.nz)

[www.greens.org.nz](http://www.greens.org.nz)

### Policy highlights

- Re-establish the target of 100% qualified staff in teacher-led ECE centres, and the funding to support this.
- Implement new teacher to child ratios in ECE (and provide funding so that these can be met):
  - 1:3 for under-twos with a group size of no more than 6 children;
  - 1:5 for two-to-threes with a group size of no more than 12 children; and
  - 1:8 for over-threes with a group size of no more than 24 children.
- Revise and improve the funding system for early childhood services in consultation with the sector.
- Support pay parity for early childhood, primary and secondary educators, based on qualifications and responsibility.
- Improve demographic and population-based planning to allow for better prediction of demand for early childhood services, while not disadvantaging rural communities.
- Foster partnerships between ECE centres and local primary and secondary schools.



# ACT

## WHO TO CONTACT

### Hilary Calvert

Early childhood spokesperson

[hilary.calvert@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:hilary.calvert@parliament.govt.nz)

[www.act.org.nz](http://www.act.org.nz)

Full political party ECE policies were not available at the time of publication. You will be able to access these from our website as they are released.

Visit [www.nzca.ac.nz/news/advocacy](http://www.nzca.ac.nz/news/advocacy)

or political party websites.

## Policy highlights

- Funding should follow the child regardless of the type of the service. Parents should make the decision that best meets their child's needs.
- Greater parental choice when deciding where to enrol their children.
- Government funding should be targeted based on need, not on a universal funding basis.
- Flexible policies to ensure that resources invested in the sector are spent for greatest gain.
- Funding for ECE should be targeted based on need. Opposed to universal funding.
- A scholarship system for children based on need, where funding follows the child. The value of scholarships adjusted to reflect a family's income and the number of children it has in ECE.
- ACT are opposed to the 20 hours free scheme.

Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association (NZCA) is the leading provider of new knowledge, fresh thinking and best practice for early childhood care and education. Achieving increasingly higher standards of care and education for the children of Aotearoa is our only focus.

We deliver

- Three-year centre-based Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) in 14 locations
- Membership support, advice and advocacy for early childhood services
- New Zealand's leading annual ECE conference
- ECE professional development programmes

