

Summary of consultation feedback on *He taonga te tamaiti - Every child a taonga: Draft strategic plan for early learning 2019-29*

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The public consultation on *He taonga te tamaiti - Every child a taonga: Draft strategic plan for early learning 2019-29* ran from 19 November 2018 – 15 March 2019.

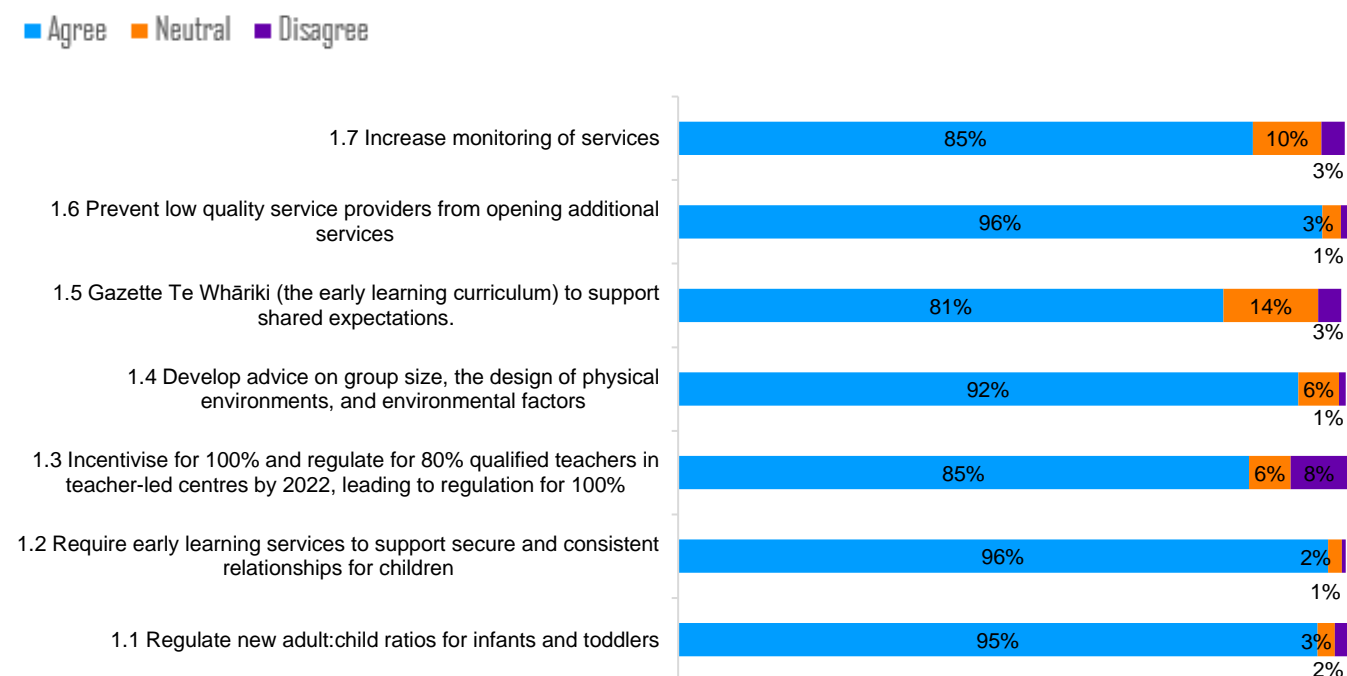
During this time the Ministry held 44 public hui around the country, attended by more than 1900 people, as well as meetings with key stakeholders. We received 2,264 online survey submissions and 219 written submissions during the consultation period (which closed on 15 March).

The Ministry also commissioned three focus groups held in Auckland, Christchurch and Whangarei with parents or caregivers of pre-school children.

Note:

The graphs (qualitative analysis) contained in this summary are based on the data collected from the online survey only. The qualitative analysis is based on the survey responses, hui and written submissions received and feedback from parents and caregivers who participated in the focus groups.

Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards



1.1 Regulate new adult child ratios for infants and toddlers

Well supported and the highest priority overall for most respondents. Some want further improvements. Concerns raised are teacher supply, funding and possible impacts on existing resource consents. Operational advice will help some services implement age bands.

1.2 Require early learning services to support secure and consistent relationships for children

Very well supported. Some respondents feel that regulation would be hard to measure and not needed if Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the percentage of qualified teachers were both improved.

1.3 Incentivise for 100%, regulate for 80% qualified in teacher-led services, leading to regulation or 100%

Mixed response. There is broad support for increasing the number of qualified teachers, but mixed support for the regulation of 100% qualified. Those in favour view it as an important way to improve quality and align the status of the sector with schooling. Those opposed have concerns about implementation and impacts, including desire to retain 'unqualified' people with valued skills and knowledge (including *te reo*) and in-service training. The majority of these respondents would like to see 80% regulated, but continue to incentivise for 100%. Some respondents want more funding and improved mentoring for provisionally certificated teachers, and changes to the IELTS test. Parents in the three focus groups had varied views about the need to increase the percentage of qualified staff in teacher-led centres. Some parents feel that 'personality can be more important than a degree', while others feel that 'having the right knowledge' is important'.

1.4 Develop advice on group size, the design of physical environments and environmental factors

Very well supported. A few respondents want immediate improvements to regulation – others note that future regulation could negatively impact on services' viability or narrow diversity. Some respondents offered to contribute advice.

1.5 Gazette *Te Whāriki*: (the early learning curriculum) to support shared expectations

Mostly supported. Most respondents agree that *Te Whāriki* needs to be embedded within the sector, however some don't see gazetting as a priority or cited concerns that it may lead to more prescriptive approaches.

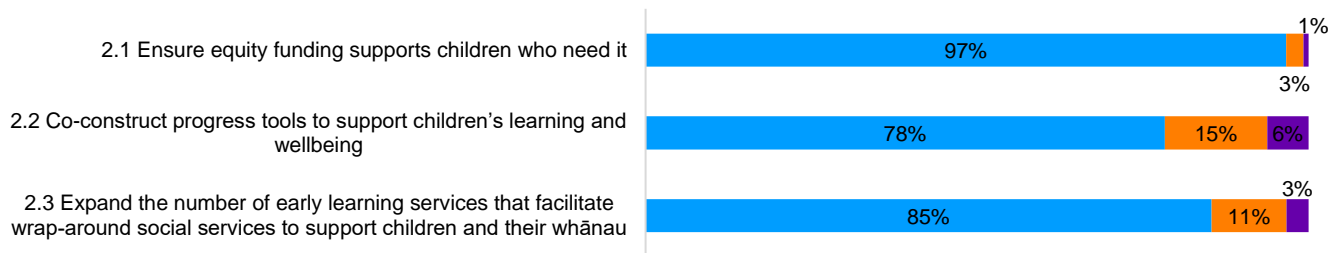
1.6 Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services

Well supported. There is some concern that well-performing providers who purchase struggling centres to 'turn them around' could be penalised, and that owners and directors involved in a failing centres should be prevented from setting up new services under a different company name. Some respondents want *mana whenua* consultation as part of applications to expand.

1.7 Increase monitoring of services

Mostly supported, but a large number of respondents are concerned that this would place additional time and pressure on centres already struggling or that unannounced visits would not produce a constructive relationship between centres and ERO. Some respondents want accountabilities to monitor cultural responsiveness and for *mana whenua* to be involved in accountabilities. Some respondents noted the importance of cultural competency among those making assessments. Parents in the focus groups expressed interest in being more involved in monitoring.

Goal 2: Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive



2.1 Ensure equity funding supports children who need it

Very well supported. Many respondents suggest funding should be based on the child's needs, rather than the centre's postcode and that there is improved monitoring to ensure it is spent on supporting these children. Some want mana whenua involved in a review, and for te reo Māori immersion centres to be included in the review.

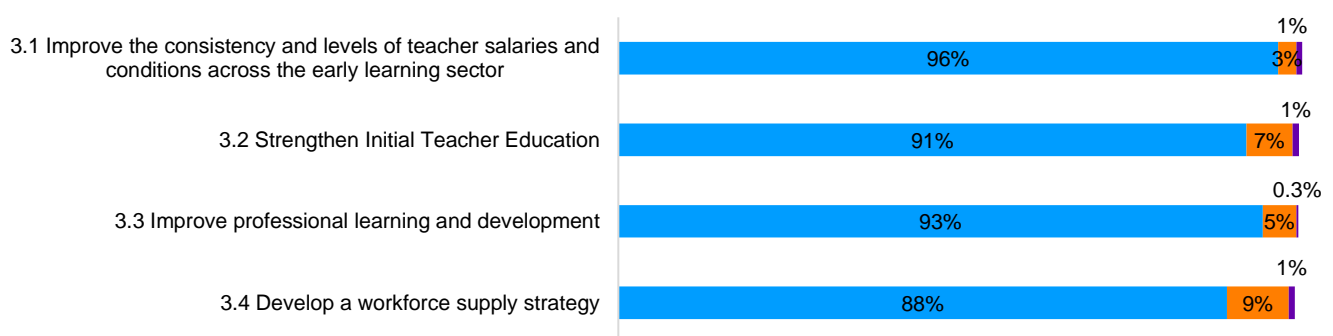
2.2 Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing

Mostly supported. Science and health advisors and some in disadvantaged communities are positive about the potential for progress tools to better support children. However, many respondents concerned that progress tools may drive a narrow ages and stages 'tick box' approach, or overly focus on academic skills – both approaches strongly opposed. Some respondents want mana whenua involved in the process. Parents in the focus groups noted their desire to know about their child's progress

2.3 Expand the number of early learning services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whanau

Well supported. Most respondents feel that early learning services should facilitate easy access to other services and some emphasised the increasing number of children presenting with behavioural or learning difficulties. Many respondents note that funding is needed to realise this recommendation.

Goal 3: Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning



3.1 Improve the consistency and level of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector

Very well supported and viewed as integral to improving the sector. Mixed views about how to achieve. Many suggest a collective bargaining approach, a significant number do not. Some respondents want funded release time included in conditions.

3.2 Strengthen Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Very well supported. Key concerns with current ITE include perceptions that students lack general subject knowledge and practical skills for teaching and that ITE is of variable quality. Teaching Council is releasing ITE Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review Requirements (the Requirements) - represent a shift in expectations for ITE. Some want local training providers to develop relationships with mana whenua and iwi to inform cultural content of programmes, and for compulsory cultural audits of training providers. Others want specific ITE courses for Pacific teachers.

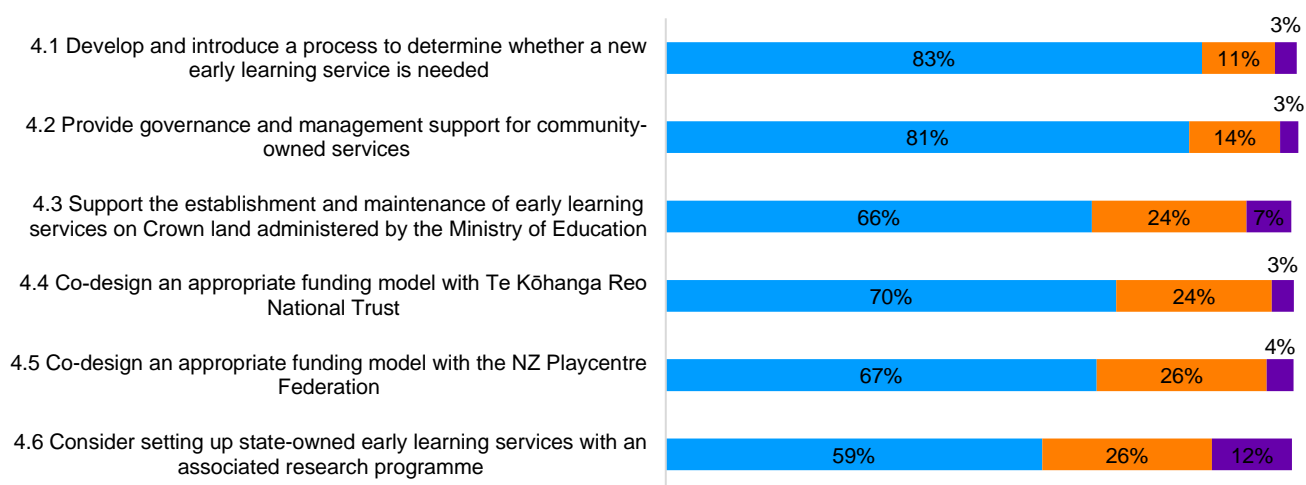
3.3 Improve professional learning and development (PLD)

Well supported. Many respondents express concerns about access, cost and quality. Funding for teacher release time and travel is a barrier, especially in rural areas. Some respondents suggest ideas for PLD focus, such as leadership, cultural competency, health and special education. Some want localised PLD programmes facilitated by mana whenua endorsed providers. Also, facilitation by providers with appropriate language skills (particularly Pacific).

3.4 Develop a workforce supply strategy

Very well supported. Concerns about teacher supply are prominent themes throughout the submissions. Many respondents want the Ministry to be more active in attracting and retaining Māori and Pacific teachers and males. Some want collaboration between the Ministry and iwi to provide targeted incentives to whānau. Some want a specific plan to train and upskill Pacific teachers. Parents in the focus groups noted that there is value in a diverse workforce.

Goal 4: Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse



4.1 Develop and introduce a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed

Well-supported. Some respondents want community-owned services to be given priority and others want all new services to demonstrate how te reo Māori, tikanga and local mātauranga will be incorporated. A number of larger providers are opposed because they feel that limiting the provision of services may lead to complacency or stagnation of existing services and prevent innovative service offerings. Some respondents also noted that planning provision is complex with geography being only one feature of what's valued by parents. These respondents do not think the Ministry is best placed to make informed decisions and that a market approach is preferable. Parents in the focus groups expressed support for the idea of planned provision.

4.2 Provide governance and management support for community-owned services

Very well supported. Many believe that support should also be available to privately-owned services. A few submitters suggest that community-based, stand-alone ECE services should be encouraged to move under the umbrella of larger community-based entities, and that past governance and management support offered by the Ministry be reintroduced and that a more proactive approach be taken.

4.3 Support the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Crown land administered by the Ministry of Education

Mixed support. Some respondents conflate this issue with the idea of state-owned services. Kindergarten is viewed as the primary example of success in this area by some and NZ Kindergartens want free rent on school land. A significant number of respondents think that decisions should not be based on ownership models.

4.4 Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust

Well supported. A small number of respondents would like to see funding distributed equitably across all providers.

4.5 Co-design an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation

Well supported. A small number of respondents would like to see funding distributed equitably across all providers.

4.6 Consider setting up state-owned early learning services with an associated research programme

The least well-supported proposal. Although the survey shows 59% agreement, a large number of written submissions are not in favour. Concerns include state-owned services having disproportional access to resources and becoming generic. Respondents are also concerned about a conflict of interest if the government licenses and owns services. Some want a Whānau Ora navigation approach to enable whānau to access a variety of services through single access point.

Goal 5: The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve



5.1 Establish innovation hubs for early learning services

Well supported with respondents positive about the chance to collaborate with research experts. A small proportion are concerned that hubs won't be utilised equitably or lead to better outcomes for children.

5.2 Support early learning services to collaborate with other education services

Well supported. Most respondents view increased cooperation and partnership as supporting the status of early childhood education and of particular benefit to rural and isolated areas. A small number feel that their voices are not heard in collaborations that involve the wider education sector.

5.3 Support robust internal evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement

Very well supported. However, the feedback also requests that ERO retain a core role in the internal evaluation of centres –providing an objective peer-review of findings and processes.

What's missing?

- » A funding increase and a funding system review to streamline the system
- » Better integration of the plan with the Government's *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* and *Kōrero Mātauranga*, including the *Tomorrow's Schools Review* and *Learning Support Action Plan 2019-25*
- » Clarity about how Te Tiriti o Waitangi would be enacted in the plan and how the plan would improve education for Māori and Pasifika
- » Inclusion of the outcomes of the Home-Based review and greater attention to social supports to enable parents to stay at home with their children
- » Greater emphasis on child health and wellbeing, including access to learning support
- » A stronger approach to purposefully building a public early learning system that moves away from a privatised, profit-focused system
- » Greater focus on growing leadership capability and digital equity for children and teachers.