

2023 ECE Political Parties Election Survey

In September 2023 we surveyed the political parties currently in Parliament on where they stood on the five fixes for ECE identified by those working in the sector. These are: improving ratios, pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff, improved access to learning support, fixing the funding system and prioritising Māori, Pasifika and community-based provision. You can see what we asked parties to commit to in each of these areas in bold, and the response from them below.

We also asked about their position on keeping Fair Pay Agreements. We then rated each party based on their responses.

In the interests of transparency, below are the commitments made by those political parties. Each party is listed in alphabetical order. The question for each of these fixes was “If in Government would your party commit to...”.

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The ACT Party

1. Improving ratios

Improving ratios in ECE, through an immediate move to a 1:8 ratio for two year olds, a staged introduction of 1:8 for 3-6 year olds, and a plan for getting to 1:3 for under 2 year olds

ACT does not have a policy on the teacher-to-student ratios for early childhood education centres, however, believes that ECEs should be free to operate with the ratios that work best for their centre’s individual needs and resources.

Maintain incentives for 100% qualified kaiako

Under ACT’s Policing Red Tape and Regulation policy, the requirement around the ratio of adults with teaching qualifications will be one of the regulations that is reviewed by our Ministry of Regulation. The Ministry would consider such regulations against the best available evidence on what factors improve educational outcomes, as well as the implications of making these factors a sector-wide requirement. After all, even if there are some benefits, some regulations might come at the cost of restricting the availability of ECEs and significantly increasing the cost.

2. Pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff

Embedding pay parity for all qualified kaiako in ECE, along with the funding to pay for it

ACT does not have an early childhood education policy on pay parity.

Closing the pay gap for non-teaching staff in ECE

ACT believes that these employment issues are best dealt with by the centres who understand their particular needs best, and not have matters like this forced onto centres by the centralised bureaucracy.

3. Improved access to learning support

A rapid reduction in wait times for early intervention services and ensuring the availability of publicly funded and delivered services for all children in all services, accompanied by the development of culturally responsive intervention services

ACT supports efforts to reduce wait times for early intervention services, and acknowledges that too many children are not getting the attention they need and are consequently falling through the cracks. However, we cannot continue the Government's track record of pouring money into something without determining what the problems are and figuring out how to make systems and processes more effective and efficient. Early intervention services are best dealt through devolved intervention services (such as through iwi) who understand the needs of students and their communities best.

Increase dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools and the number of specialists (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists, and resource teachers) to meet student need

ACT recognises children have a wide range of needs, but our one-size-fits-all education system has failed to adapt and provide every student with timely access to early intervention services.

Currently, a child will receive \$250,000 of taxpayer-funded education over their life, but parents have little choice in how it's spent. ACT will provide every child with a Student Education Account, which will give parents more choice and control over how that money is spent. Parents will be able to use funding in their student education account at any registered educational institution that will accept their child's enrolment, whether that be public, partnership or private. Parents of children who require learning support will benefit from our policy as they will have greater flexibility to choose a school that meets their child's needs.

4. Fix funding

Increasing 20hrs free funding to reflect actual centre costs

Under ACT's Student Education Accounts policy, early childhood education will continue to function as it presently does, with funding disbursed through Student Education Accounts. The funding available for Early Childhood Education will be equivalent to that currently available through the 20-hour free program.

Implementing a split between teacher salaries and operational funding to improve funding transparency

ACT does not have a policy on splitting teacher salaries from operational funding.

The development of mechanisms to ensure that funding keeps up with kaiako wages, and operational funding keeps pace with inflation

ACT does not have a policy on funding mechanisms for wages and operational funding linked to inflation. Ultimately, funding has to go where it can maximise the greatest education outcomes for all students, which may preclude a rigid inflation indexing.

Implementing a fee cap for parents to ensure ECE remains affordable

ACT understands the need to ensure that early childhood education is affordable for parents and caregivers. ACT would establish a Ministry of Regulation and has pledged that early childhood education would be the first of four sectors to undergo a review. The early childhood education sector faces a host of regulations aimed at protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and improving the quality of their education. However, not all regulations are made equal, and over-regulation is hurting the sector right now. It is not only restricting the supply of new ECEs and the availability of places in existing ECEs, it is exhausting the workforce. Getting the regulations right will ensure ECE is accessible and affordable for all New Zealanders.

Continued recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and the removal of financial disincentives to hiring experienced staff

ACT would continue to support recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and would support efforts to bring in more experienced staff and to remove the bureaucracy that makes hiring new staff so burdensome. Recognising centres with high levels of qualified teachers provides transparency to parents and caregivers who want to be as informed as possible when considering early childhood education centres for their child.

The development of clearer guidelines for ratio requirements, for example recognising room based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level

ACT does not have a particular policy on ratio requirements, but believes that these kinds of decisions are best made by the centre leadership and parents who understand their children's needs best, as opposed to the "one size fits all" approach from the Wellington bureaucracy.

5. Prioritising Māori, Pasifika, and community-based provision

Additional funding for Māori, Pasifika, and community-based providers in recognition of the important service they provide to their communities

Under ACT's Student Education Account policy, parents will have the freedom to send their child to whichever early childhood education provider they see fit; whether it's a Maori, Pasifika or a community-based provider. A child will receive \$250,000 of taxpayer-funded education over their life, but currently, parents have little choice in how it's spent. ACT will empower parents by placing this money in a Student Education Account, and parents will be able to use it at any registered educational institution that will accept their child's enrolment.

Extending funding for allowances and professional development for kaiako who teach in reo Māori

ACT recognises that teaching is already a complex and multi-disciplinary career and the demands on a teacher are tailored to the needs of the individual early childhood education centre a teacher works in.

The creation of a centralised, umbrella body that community-based ECE providers can opt into, which would provide back office support and manage funding, as well as ensure the continued excellent quality of community ECE

ACT does not have a position on this policy proposal, but is sceptical that the answer is yet more centralised bureaucracy.

Fair Pay Agreements

Keeping Fair Pay Agreements, which kaiako and kaimahi in ECE are currently unifying around as a mechanism to have a real say over their terms and conditions of work

ACT will not keep Fair Pay Agreements. The policy has been suggested as a response to poor productivity and wage growth in industries in which employers have strong bargaining power. But [Treasury has said](#) there is no empirical to support the Government's case. ACT supports firms' and workers' right to make their own agreements, and our vision is of a flexible and innovative economy in which New Zealanders can create new opportunities through freedom.

The Green Party

1. Improving ratios

Improving ratios in ECE, through an immediate move to a 1:8 ratio for two year olds, a staged introduction of 1:8 for 3-6 year olds, and a plan for getting to 1:3 for under 2 year olds

Yes

Maintain incentives for 100% qualified kaiako

Yes

2. Pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff

Embedding pay parity for all qualified kaiako in ECE, along with the funding to pay for it

Yes

Closing the pay gap for non-teaching staff in ECE

Yes

3. Improved access to learning support

A rapid reduction in wait times for early intervention services and ensuring the availability of publicly funded and delivered services for all children in all services, accompanied by the development of culturally responsive intervention services

Yes

Increase dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools and the number of specialists (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists, and resource teachers) to meet student need

Yes

4. Fix funding

Increasing 20hrs free funding to reflect actual centre costs

Yes

Implementing a split between teacher salaries and operational funding to improve funding transparency

Yes

The development of mechanisms to ensure that funding keeps up with kaiako wages, and operational funding keeps pace with inflation

Yes

Implementing a fee cap for parents to ensure ECE remains affordable

Yes

Continued recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and the removal of financial disincentives to hiring experienced staff

Yes

The development of clearer guidelines for ratio requirements, for example recognising room based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level

Yes

5. Prioritising Māori, Pasifika, and community-based provision

Additional funding for Māori, Pasifika, and community-based providers in recognition of the important service they provide to their communities

Yes

Extending funding for allowances and professional development for kaiako who teach in reo Māori?

Yes

The creation of a centralised, umbrella body that community-based ECE providers can opt into, which would provide back office support and manage funding, as well as ensure the continued excellent quality of community ECE

Yes

Fair Pay Agreements

Keeping Fair Pay Agreements, which kaiako and kaimahi in ECE are currently unifying around as a mechanism to have a real say over their terms and conditions of work

Yes

The Labour Party

1. Improving ratios

Improving ratios in ECE, through an immediate move to a 1:8 ratio for two year olds, a staged introduction of 1:8 for 3-6 year olds, and a plan for getting to 1:3 for under 2 year olds

Maintain incentives for 100% qualified kaiako

- Labour was proud to support a qualified early learning workforce by reinstating the higher funding band for services that employ a fully qualified and certificated teaching workforce (the '100% funding band'), which the previous National government had cut.
- A re-elected Labour government will ensure that this higher funding band is maintained.
- Labour also supports the reduction of ratios as we acknowledge this is important for quality teaching and learning as well as teacher wellbeing. Teacher supply is an important factor in being able to achieve this. Increasing the supply of ECE teachers will be supported through the recent investment in improved pay and conditions for ECE teachers.
- We have invested \$587m over the last three budgets to improve teacher salaries in education and care services.
- Continuing to support more locally trained ECE teachers through a number of initiatives including over 100 scholarship places, incentives for former teachers to return to the profession and recruitment campaigns.
- And put measures in place to help centres recruit overseas teachers by increasing the incentives to come and live and work as an ECE teacher in NZ. We've also fast tracked ECE teachers on the Green List and given them a clear pathway to residency.

2. Pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff

Embedding pay parity for all qualified kaiako in ECE, along with the funding to pay for it

Closing the pay gap for non-teaching staff in ECE

- Under Labour over \$1.3 billion has been invested in pay parity, one of our largest Education investments.
- Labour committed to achieving pay parity in the last term of government and we delivered that.

- Under the latest increase, ECE teachers in centres opting into pay parity will receive a pay increases of up to \$6,850 from their current salaries on 1 December. This will match the kindergarten salary scale effective from 1 December 2023.
- Further salary increases after December 2023 to continue to maintain parity with school and kindergarten teachers as further settlement adjustments roll out in 2024 will therefore need to be determined in future budgets.
- We will make sure the funding we made available over the last four Budgets reaches teachers through more comprehensive and more regular compliance checks on employers in relation to the pay attestations they have made.
- We also acknowledge the feedback from the sector that funding model for pay parity is flawed and have committed to review it.

3. Improved access to learning support

A rapid reduction in wait times for early intervention services and ensuring the availability of publicly funded and delivered services for all children in all services, accompanied by the development of culturally responsive intervention services

Increase dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools and the number of specialists (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists, and resource teachers) to meet student need

- Over the past 6 years Labour has invested \$1 billion additional funding into learning support services to help alleviate the demand, reduce wait times, and respond to unmet need.
- We acknowledge that there is still unmet need in education as evidenced through the High Needs Review. We are committed to seeing the Review through by working with the education and disability sectors on the next steps.
- In Budget 2023 we allocated \$40m into Specialised Learning Support Coordination and facilities in schools and kura providing Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium education. The funding will support Kaupapa Māori and Māori Medium Education schools to better cater to ākongā who need extra support to engage and achieve in education. This design process will be Māori-led.
- Supporting children and young people with learning support needs means we need to build the workforce capability and capacity at the same time.

4. Fix funding

Increasing 20hrs free funding to reflect actual centre costs

Implementing a split between teacher salaries and operational funding to improve funding transparency

The development of mechanisms to ensure that funding keeps up with kaiako wages, and operational funding keeps pace with inflation

Implementing a fee cap for parents to ensure ECE remains affordable

Continued recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and the removal of financial disincentives to hiring experienced staff

The development of clearer guidelines for ratio requirements, for example recognising room based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level

- The Labour Government significantly increased the rate at which the childcare subsidy payment is made to 4.6% to help offset the decrease in the real value of the 20 hours ECE payments when they were essentially frozen under National between 2010 and 2017. This will make a significant difference to incentivising centres to take up the expansion of 20 hours free to 2 year olds.
- National has pledged to cut all of the Budget 23 funding for 20 Hours ECE. This would be mean cancelling this 4.6% increase.
- As noted above, Labour ensure that the higher funding band for services that employ a fully qualified and certificated teaching workforce is maintained. We also acknowledge the feedback from the sector that funding model for pay parity is flawed and have committed to review it.

5. Prioritising Māori, Pasifika, and community-based provision

Additional funding for Māori, Pasifika, and community-based providers in recognition of the important service they provide to their communities

Extending funding for allowances and professional development for kaiako who teach in reo Māori

The creation of a centralised, umbrella body that community-based ECE providers can opt into, which would provide back office support and manage funding, as well as ensure the continued excellent quality of community ECE

- Under the latest Collective Bargaining settlement, the Government was pleased to fund the increase of the the Māori Immersion allowance across all levels. We believe it is important to support the taonga of Te Reo Maori in education and recognise Kaiako who have the ability to share this in our classrooms and communities.

Fair Pay Agreements

Keeping Fair Pay Agreements, which kaiako and kaimahi in ECE are currently unifying around as a mechanism to have a real say over their terms and conditions of work

- A re-elected Labour government will safeguard Fair Pay Agreements.
- Fair Pay Agreements address the imbalance of power between workers and employers in our labour market, and a race to the bottom in industries that compete on cost.
- New Zealand was unusual internationally in not having bargaining at sector or occupation level. But Labour, alongside the unions, has fought hard to deliver Fair Pay Agreements for Kiwis.
- Under Labour, waterside workers, supermarket workers, commercial cleaners, early childhood educators, bus and coach drivers, cleaners, hospitality workers and security officers and guards are already in the process of bargaining for rights their international colleagues have had for years.

The National Party

1. Improving ratios

Improving ratios in ECE, through an immediate move to a 1:8 ratio for two year olds, a staged introduction of 1:8 for 3-6 year olds, and a plan for getting to 1:3 for under 2 year olds

Maintain incentives for 100% qualified kaiako

We do not think reducing teacher to child ratios is the highest priority for education funding in the short-term.

2. Pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff

Embedding pay parity for all qualified kaiako in ECE, along with the funding to pay for it

Closing the pay gap for non-teaching staff in ECE

National supports the principle of pay parity, including current funding committed to it. Our priority for Early Childhood Education will be implementing our Family Boost policy to help young families dealing with the cost-of-living crisis afford early childhood education

3. Improved access to learning support

A rapid reduction in wait times for early intervention services and ensuring the availability of publicly funded and delivered services for all children in all services, accompanied by the development of culturally responsive intervention services

Increase dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools and the number of specialists (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists, and resource teachers) to meet student need

We support improved access to learning support and will continue to invest in early childhood education to achieve this over time.

4. Fix funding

Increasing 20hrs free funding to reflect actual centre costs

Implementing a split between teacher salaries and operational funding to improve funding transparency

The development of mechanisms to ensure that funding keeps up with kaiako wages, and operational funding keeps pace with inflation

Implementing a fee cap for parents to ensure ECE remains affordable

Continued recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and the removal of financial disincentives to hiring experienced staff

The development of clearer guidelines for ratio requirements, for example recognising room based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level

National will retain 20 hours free childcare for 3-5 year-olds along with existing MSD childcare subsidies. In addition, National will introduce the FamilyBoost Childcare tax credit, worth up to \$150 per fortnight, which will benefit up to 130,000 families with young children.

5. Prioritising Māori, Pasifika, and community-based provision

Additional funding for Māori, Pasifika, and community-based providers in recognition of the important service they provide to their communities

Extending funding for allowances and professional development for kaiako who teach in reo Māori

The creation of a centralised, umbrella body that community-based ECE providers can opt into, which would provide back office support and manage funding, as well as ensure the continued excellent quality of community ECE

National believes there should be a range of providers available to families. We believe increasing access to ECE providers is the best way to ensure different preferences are accommodated. That's why our FamilyBoost Childcare Tax credit delivers direct cash support to eligible families, giving them more choice about the provider they choose.

Fair Pay Agreements

Keeping Fair Pay Agreements, which kaiako and kaimahi in ECE are currently unifying around as a mechanism to have a real say over their terms and conditions of work

National supports higher wages for working New Zealanders, but the way we achieve that is through a strong and growing economy, not through one-size-fits-all government-imposed union deals that will remove flexibility for both employers and employees. The only genuine way to increase incomes in the long term is to rebuild the economy and put an end to the cost-of-living crisis.

Te Pāti Māori

1. Improving ratios

Improving ratios in ECE, through an immediate move to a 1:8 ratio for two year olds, a staged introduction of 1:8 for 3-6 year olds, and a plan for getting to 1:3 for under 2 year olds

SUPPORT - Te Pāti Māori has committed to increasing ratios in ECE to ensure we provide the support our babies deserve in such a key part of their lives. We will drive whānau into ECE training with adequate resourcing and incentives and implement pay equity to achieve increased ratios.

Maintain incentives for 100% qualified kaiako

SUPPORT - Te Pāti Māori is 100% committed to maintaining incentives to ensure we retain qualified kaiako across ECE and kōhanga, so that those most qualified in this space feel appreciated, acknowledged and valued for their contribution to the development of the next generation.

2. Pay parity for kaiako and living wages for support staff

Embedding pay parity for all qualified kaiako in ECE, along with the funding to pay for it

Closing the pay gap for non-teaching staff in ECE

SUPPORT - We must entrench pay parity so that our qualified Kaiako are valued to provide the support our babies need, particularly over the most important developmental stages up to age 3.

As for closing the pay-gap, we must first provide opportunity to put non-qualified staff into training via incentivisation and initiatives that acknowledge their time and effort. Regardless though, Te Pāti Māori has committed and will re-commit to ensure a living wage for all.

We would fund this using our plan to redistribute wealth see's the state \$26-Billion better off. This will be reinvested into whānau, including into education.

3. Improved access to learning support

A rapid reduction in wait times for early intervention services and ensuring the availability of publicly funded and delivered services for all children in all services, accompanied by the development of culturally responsive intervention services

Increase dedicated teacher aide funding in early childhood centres and schools and the number of specialists (e.g., psychologists, physiotherapists, and resource teachers) to meet student need

SUPPORT - Te Pāti Māori commits to ensuring we improve access to learning through the development of a health workforce equipped for early intervention.

Our health workforce development plan will ensure that we invest \$1B per-annum to train a workforce that is adequately enabled to support Aotearoa, including our youngest members.

This includes doctors, psychologists, speech-language therapists and social support workers that are adequately trained clinically but also culturally so they can provide their approach suited to that of the whānau. This will fundamentally allow the early interventions service wait times to be reduced, and ensure our whānau are receptive to the intervention through a cultural based tikanga approach.

4. Fix funding

Increasing 20hrs free funding to reflect actual centre costs

SUPPORT– Every centre and their incurred costs are influenced by a range of variables, and so they should be funded accordingly.

Implementing a split between teacher salaries and operational funding to improve funding transparency

SUPPORT – We are all about full transparency when it comes to the use of the state’s funds. We would support this.

The development of mechanisms to ensure that funding keeps up with kaiako wages, and operational funding keeps pace with inflation

SUPPORT– just like the regulation of a living wage, we would support mechanisms that yearly guides funding principles for education. This ensuring that wages, and funding is kept in line with inflation so as to ensure the additional incurred costs are not passed on to whānau.

Implementing a fee cap for parents to ensure ECE remains affordable

Continued recognition of centres with high levels of qualified teachers, and the removal of financial disincentives to hiring experienced staff

SUPPORT – Te Pāti Māori values all kaimahi involved in education and we need to especially acknowledge those that have taken the time to become qualified. The absence of pay parity is a prime example of financial disincentive to hiring experienced staff, we have committed to entrenching it into policy.

The development of clearer guidelines for ratio requirements, for example recognising room based ratios as opposed to those counted at the centre level

SUPPORT with GUIDANCE - out a matter of safety and improved development and educational outcome – this is something we would happily support guided by NZEI and Kōhanga Reo.

5. Prioritising Māori, Pasifika, and community-based provision

Additional funding for Māori, Pasifika, and community-based providers in recognition of the important service they provide to their communities

SUPPORT – As the Māori population continues to become younger overall and therefore, continues to grow, we must be prepared to support Māori and community mediums of education. The exiting of the baby boomer generation will be felt as they move into retirement. This proves a significant risk to our economies future skillset.

Te Pāti Māori will ensure all Māori medium education is funded equal to its mainstream equivalents through the implementation of equity-based funding models. Additionally, we will encourage hapū, iwi education and training initiatives with the allocation of a \$200M fund to ensure our communities, and babies know their identity, learn from their tupuna and grow a strong sense of identity.

Extending funding for allowances and professional development for kaiako who teach in reo Māori

SUPPORT – The use of Te Reo Māori is growing among Aotearoa and Te Pāti Māori ultimately wants an Aotearoa Hou where there are no barriers to learning your reo. Therefore, we will increase and promote

scholarships available for young Māori to train as teachers of Te Aho Matua and for reo Māori speakers to train as teachers.

Additionally, we will ensure that Māori staff are hired, and existing Māori staff paid extra, to lead cultural programmes such as kapa haka, taiaha, raranga and running school-based marae.

The creation of a centralised, umbrella body that community-based ECE providers can opt into, which would provide back office support and manage funding, as well as ensure the continued excellent quality of community ECE

SUPPORT

Fair Pay Agreements

Keeping Fair Pay Agreements, which kaiako and kaimahi in ECE are currently unifying around as a mechanism to have a real say over their terms and conditions of work

SUPPORT – Our movement is driven by the people, without this forum the realistic challenges being faced by Kaiako and kaimahi in ECE will simply fall on deaf ears.

This is about holding the government accountable, to task and ensuring that our kaimahi are valued and feel supported.