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CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE RIGHT TO ACCESS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A new report into early childhood education calls for every child to have access to early childhood education as of right, and for the government to take responsibility for planning a national network of services.

The report called “Strengthening Community-based Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa – New Zealand” has been written by two of the country’s most highly regarded early childhood specialists – the Dean of the University of Otago College of Education Helen May and Linda Mitchell from the University of Waikato’s School of Education.

It sets out a vision for quality public early childhood education for 2020 and comes out of the Quality Public Early Childhood Education Project, involving a nine organisations representing a diverse range of services including education and care centres, kindergartens, playcentres and home-based services, as well as NZEI Te Riu Roa, the union for early childhood teachers and support staff.

There is a wealth of research showing that quality early childhood education has a long-lasting effect on the educational outcomes for children. Participation levels in early childhood education in New Zealand have risen dramatically in recent years, however those children who are most disadvantaged are those most likely to miss out. There are still large gaps in the quality provision, accessibility and affordability in many communities. The community sector would like to serve those communities, but lacks the capital to expand.

This report recommends lobbying and developing policy for a national approach to the provision of early childhood education. Strengthening community-based services to provide more opportunities for all children would be a key focus.

NZEI President Frances Nelson says ultimately the report calls for an expansion of free provision of early childhood education as a fundamental right.

“Early childhood education provides the foundation for all future learning and families in all types of communities should have the right to access high quality services. This report is significant for that vision,” she says.

The report is being officially launched at NZEI at 5pm on 3 November in front of a large number of representatives from the early childhood sector.

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