

Media Release	June 26th, 2009
From NZEI Te Riu Roa	For immediate use

## **INNOVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION UNDER THREAT**

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa says government's Budget cuts to professional development programmes for early childhood teachers will undo years of work and undermine quality education for our youngest children.

The government has put professional development contracts, which are run through education providers and universities on hold. The impact on those people providing the contracts and the early childhood centres which benefit, are only just being realised.

NZEI National Executive member Hayley Whitaker says professional development is invaluable to early childhood teachers and services. Professional development advisors provide in-centre training, support new teachers, give advice and guidance, and also play a big role in supporting services which ERO has identified as "high need".

"A lot of people, especially those in stand-alone early childhood services, rely completely on outside professional development for support and encouragement. It also gives them resources and ideas about best teaching and management practices that they wouldn't get anywhere else," she says.

The 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education aimed to increase quality, participation and collaboration within the sector. Included in that are moves to professionalise the teaching workforce.

Hayley Whitaker says putting professional development programmes on hold undermines all that.

"I feel like that strategic plan is having the heart ripped out of it. We've been working for years to provide quality early childhood education for our youngest children and to gain professional recognition. This takes us back years."

The government has not yet indicated when funding for early childhood professional development programmes might be restored or at what levels.

As a result dozens of NZEI members who are involved in delivering the contracts will be made redundant, and if the government does decide to put funding back in, continuity and staff capacity to run the contracts will have been lost.

The provision of the early childhood professional development contracts is critical in ensuring New Zealand remains at the forefront of quality early childhood education practice.

NZEI members will be lobbying MPs and the Minister of Education with their concerns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

NZEI SPOKESPERSON: Hayley Whitaker 0211225677

MEDIA CONTACT: Liz Brown 04-3822703(w) or 0272683291