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## **GOVT SHOULD NOT WALK AWAY FROM A FULLY QUALIFIED EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING WORKFORCE**

The government is ignoring the wishes of the early childhood sector by walking away from a commitment to a fully qualified teaching workforce, according to the education union NZEI Te Riu Roa.

From next year 80% of teachers were supposed to be qualified and registered but the government has now pushed that target out by two years. It also appears to have dropped altogether a commitment for a fully qualified teaching workforce by 2012.

NZEI, which represents thousands of early childhood teachers, recognises there are pressures to meet next year's target due to teacher shortages.

However it says there is no reason to abandon moves towards a fully qualified workforce by 2012. Earlier this year the Ministry told an NZEI teacher supply conference that it was on track to meet the fully qualified target which could include 30% of teachers still in training. There was also firm agreement at that conference among public and private ECE providers, that there should be no watering down or change to the qualification targets.

NZEI National Executive member Judith Nowotarski says one of the strongest indicators of quality early childhood education is having fully qualified and registered staff.

"It is disappointing to see the government weaken its commitment to quality education for young children. We want assurances that it will reinstate or continue with moves towards having a 100% qualified and registered workforce," she says.

Teacher supply in early childhood education is complex but one of the problems is the lack of alignment with government tertiary education policy. Despite the teacher shortage the number of training places available in early childhood education is capped and training providers have to turn away hundreds of suitable applicants.

Judith Nowotarski says "it's ironic that on the eve of World Teachers Day which is about celebrating and valuing teaching and learning, we have a government announcement which completely undermines it."

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