

Media Release	December 23, 2009
From NZEI Te Riu Roa	For immediate use

EDUCATORS PUBLISH WISH LIST FOR CHRISTMAS

The best Christmas present the Government could give New Zealand children would be making education the country's top investment priority, NZEI Te Riu Roa says.

Investment in public education is what makes the difference in giving people skills and raising economic value, NZEI President Frances Nelson says. "In an economic crisis, it's even more important that education is made the backbone of New Zealand's recovery programme."

"Investing in education is the centre-piece of economic policy in high performing OECD countries and in close neighbours such as Australia. Tough times are not the time to slash education spending. Education is an investment in the children who will be living and working in New Zealand and taking the country forward in the future."

Frances Nelson says recent Treasury reports and Don Brash's 2025 Taskforce miss the boat by recommending cuts in education spending.

"If we want to remain "in step" with other OECD countries we need to see education as our Number 1 investment, not a cost."

She says New Zealand and its children would be done a disservice if Budget cuts in future undermine teaching and learning. Bigger class sizes would mean fewer teachers and less individualized learning. Cuts to 20 hours ECE would impact on children's access to quality pre-school education and parents' access to quality care for their children during work hours. The loss of expertise in science and the arts already threatens a narrowing of the curriculum. Less professional support for teachers would result in less effective teaching. Continued low pay in the sector will lead to a high turnover in teacher aides and other school support staff critical to individual children's learning.

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