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GOVERNMENT SET TO RUIN THE PARTY FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa says it is ironic that as early childhood teachers celebrate the huge strides made in early childhood education, the government looks set to pull back on its investment.

Early childhood teachers along with NZEI and the New Zealand Childcare Association are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their first collective agreement.

The Consenting Parties Agreement, now known as the Early Childhood Education Collective Agreement or ECECA, has set the benchmark for teaching standards and conditions in early childhood centres and services around the country. It is also one of the largest multi-employer agreements in New Zealand, now involving 162 employers who operate early childhood services.

At the heart of the agreement is a commitment to provide quality teaching and learning for New Zealand's youngest learners.

NZEI says unfortunately the government doesn't share that commitment. Last year it did a u-turn on agreed qualification targets and appears to have abandoned the target of having a fully qualified and registered teaching workforce by 2012. Now it is criticising the amount of money spent on early childhood education and signalling upcoming cuts in the Budget.

NZEI Vice President Judith Nowotarski says the investment is worth it.

"Early childhood education provides the building blocks for all future education and increased investment brings huge benefits for children and parents."

"Research shows that investing in quality early childhood education is in the national interest and makes good economic sense. We need to hold onto the gains we've made and keep moving forward. The government should not seek to undermine that," she says.

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