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TREASURY PAPERS EXPOSE GOVERNMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CUTS

The education sector union NZEI Te Riu Roa says Treasury papers reveal that the Government was well aware that early childhood funding cuts would lead to increased fees for parents, but overall considered them low risk.

The government announced in the Budget that it is slashing \$400 million out of the early childhood budget over the next four years - \$295 million of which will come directly from the budgets of early childhood centres and services. The money will be taken away from services which employ between 80-100% qualified and registered teachers. The cuts will affect funding for 2000 services and affect 93,000 children.

Budget briefing papers from Treasury to Cabinet consider the removal of the funding to be “low risk” and “unlikely to have a significant impact on the ECE sector”.

“Try telling that to parents who are facing higher fees or centres who are now trying to juggle funding shortfalls of tens of thousands of dollars,” says NZEI National Executive member Hayley Whitaker.

The papers also acknowledge that the funding cuts would lead some providers to increase their fees, forcing parents to reduce hours of attendance or remove children from ECE altogether. It also considers any reduction in participation as a potential saving for the Government.

Hayley Whitaker says “that goes completely against the Government’s own rhetoric about the importance of increasing participation levels.”

“These papers show that the Government was well aware of the impact of these drastic cuts on parents and services – the fact that it went ahead anyway is unconscionable,” she says.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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