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Education and Workforce Committee
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Education (Protecting Teacher Title) Amendment Bill

New Zealand Kindergartens Te Pūtahi Kura Puhou o Aotearoa (NZK) represents the interests of 25 regional kindergarten associations which employ over 2,000 registered teachers across 445 kindergartens working with around 22,000 young children and their families and whānau each day.

We provide the following comment on Education (Protecting Teacher Title) Amendment Bill for the committee's consideration.

We acknowledge the intent of the Bill is to ensure those who have completed teacher education qualifications are entitled to call themselves teachers. We recognise there is an issue in the early childhood education sector where service providers and staff refer to adults working with children as 'teachers' and that this may imply the adults are qualified and registered teachers. Parents may assume every adult working with their child is a qualified teacher and all that it means in terms of professional knowledge and behaviours, when this is not the case. It is misleading.

A qualified and registered teacher has completed a tertiary degree. Entry to the profession requires a certain standard to be achieved and a rigorous induction period to ensure the teacher's practice is satisfactory. Teachers have to show how they maintain the currency of their practice by renewing their practising certificate every three years. Teachers are bound by a professional code of responsibility and standards. All of these measures ensure a teacher is and remains fit to teach. No such accountability applies to adults who do not hold a teacher education qualification.

While we endorse the right of a qualified and registered teacher to call themselves a teacher, and the right of parents and caregivers to know whether the adults engaging with their children are qualified and registered teachers, we recognise the Bill has its limitations and would not achieve its stated aim. The Bill limits the number of teacher education qualifications teachers could have thereby excluding many teachers across the system. Further we understand the Attorney General has declared the Bill is in breach of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act by limiting freedom of expression. For those reasons we cannot support the Bill.

Ngā mihi nui

Clare Wells
Chief Executive