

26 August, 2025

Committee Secretariat  
Education and Workforce Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Kia ora,

**Consultation on the Education and Training (Early Childhood Education Reform) Amendment Bill**

We are pleased to provide comments on this consultation.

**About Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand**

**Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ)** is the national body representing Montessori education across the country. Established in 1983, MANZ serves as the professional association for a diverse membership base, including community-based and privately-owned early learning services, as well as private, state, and state-integrated primary and secondary schools. The organisation also includes individual educators, parents, and educational institutions committed to advancing high-quality Montessori education for tamariki and rangatahi from birth to 18 years and Montessori Dementia Care.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to supporting the education sector through the delivery of authentic, evidence-informed Montessori programmes that foster the holistic development of all learners. Central to this commitment is the alignment with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and a child-centred philosophy that promotes independence, self-regulation, and a deep engagement with learning.

**Strategic Priorities and Contribution to the Education Sector**

MANZ actively contributes to the national education landscape through the following key areas:

- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi Commitment**  
MANZ upholds the principles of partnership, protection, and participation, embedding Te Tiriti into all aspects of its work and supporting members to reflect these commitments in their practice.
- **Educational Advocacy**  
MANZ serves as the voice for Montessori early childhood, primary, and secondary

education, engaging with government and sector agencies to advocate for policies that enable high-quality, innovative, and inclusive educational practice.

- **System-wide Collaboration**  
MANZ works collaboratively with other sector bodies, including education providers, professional networks, and iwi organisations, to ensure a coordinated approach to improving outcomes for all learners.
- **International Engagement**  
As part of a global Montessori network, MANZ represents New Zealand on international platforms, contributing to best practice development and policy dialogue informed by global research and experience.
- **Community Engagement and Support**  
MANZ supports whānau and communities with accessible information about Montessori education, ensuring equitable access to educational choices that reflect the diverse needs of New Zealand families.
- **Professional Learning and Development**  
MANZ delivers high-quality professional learning for Montessori kaiako across all education levels, fostering reflective practice and continuous improvement.
- **Sector Capability Building**  
MANZ plays a key role in supporting capability development in Montessori settings, offering resources and strategic guidance to strengthen leadership, curriculum delivery, and governance.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand shares the education sector's commitment to educational equity, learner wellbeing, and excellence in teaching and learning. As a long-standing contributor to the sector, MANZ is well-positioned to inform and support initiatives that prioritise learner agency, culturally responsive practice, and lifelong learning pathways.

We welcome all ongoing collaboration to ensure that Montessori education continues to contribute meaningfully to the national education system and delivers positive outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi throughout Aotearoa.

### Submission

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Education and Training (Early Childhood Education Reform) Amendment Bill. The Bill seeks to modernise New Zealand's early childhood education (ECE) regulatory system by clarifying objectives and principles, establishing an independent Director of Regulation, and streamlining licensing responsibilities.

We recognise that these changes present a significant opportunity to strengthen accountability, provide greater clarity for providers and families, and align with international best practice. At the

same time, the reforms carry operational and policy risks that must be carefully managed to safeguard service quality and continuity.

#### Key Positives

- Clearer legislative objectives that explicitly support child well-being, learning outcomes, parental participation in the workforce, and informed parental choice.
- Embedding good regulatory practice principles—proportionality, transparency, and cost minimisation—within the legislative framework.
- Stronger governance through a statutory Director of Regulation with defined, partially independent powers.
- Separation of policy from operational licensing decisions, reducing political influence in compliance matters.
- Transitional provisions designed to maintain service continuity during the changeover.
- Improved alignment between primary and secondary legislation for greater consistency.

#### Key Risks

- Tension between objectives, particularly balancing child safety and well-being with cost-efficiency and accessibility.
- Risk that an emphasis on supporting parental workforce participation may overshadow quality improvement goals.
- Complexity in transferring responsibilities and live cases to the new Director of Regulation.
- Potential rigidity in licensing criteria that may limit innovation and diversity of provision.
- Concentration of authority in a single role, increasing centralisation risks.
- Uncertainty for providers, families, and staff during the transition and early implementation phase.

#### **Proposed Mitigations**

- Establish a clear hierarchy of objectives, giving priority to child well-being and then the provision of quality education when objectives conflict.
- Phase implementation and provide detailed operational guidance to support regulators and providers particularly with the possibility of ERO taking on the role of regulators.
- Allocate dedicated transitional resourcing, and stagger the transfer of cases to manage workload peaks.
- Introduce regular review cycles for licensing criteria, with opportunities for stakeholder input and pilot models.
- Strengthen oversight of the Director's role through audits, independent review, and public reporting.
- Maintain dual references ("Secretary/Director") in guidance and communications during the adjustment period.

### Conclusion

Overall, the Bill represents a welcome step toward a more modern, transparent, and accountable ECE regulatory framework. By embedding clear objectives and sound regulatory principles, it will provide regulators, providers, and families with a more consistent decision-making foundation.

The reforms directly respond to findings from the Ministry for Regulation's 2024 review, which noted that New Zealand lags behind comparable countries. If implemented carefully, they have the potential to deliver enduring benefits for children, parents, and providers alike, while strengthening public confidence in the ECE system.

To achieve these outcomes, it will be critical to ensure that child well-being remains the paramount objective, that implementation is well-resourced and carefully managed, and that ongoing review mechanisms are embedded from the outset. With these safeguards in place, Montessori Aotearoa NZ supports the intent of the Bill and its direction for the future of early childhood education in Aotearoa.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with this consultation process.

Ngā mihi nui,



**Cathy Wilson**

Chief Executive / Kaiwhakahaere Matua