

# Petition to Implement a 1:4 ratio for children under three years of age attending Early Childhood Education (ECE) 1:4 -U3!

## Sign the petition here:

Landing page with downloadable resources and information <https://ecnz.ac.nz/u3ratio-petition>

Change.org page <https://chnng.it/pqQgLgjr7k>

## The current ratios

The ratio is currently one teacher per five children under two and two teachers per twenty children over two. We are proposing 1:4 teacher to child ratio for under three's. 1:4 -U3!

## The wording on the Parliamentary Petition

I respectfully request: That the House of Representatives implement a 1:4 ratio for under threes (one teacher to four children under three years of age attending Early Childhood Education) supported by realistic funding so that the Early Childhood Education sector can affordably deliver this ratio.

## This is about the quality provision of ECE

When children/tamariki are young, they need dedicated attention to stay safe and have their needs tended to. We believe the current Early Childhood Education ratio of one teacher/kaiako to five children under two needs to be updated. We believe lower ratios are beneficial for tamariki because they enable teachers to focus on children; they better support child-staff relationships; they increase the quality of interactions between adults and children; and they reduce the stress on tamariki.

## The petition opens Wed 31<sup>st</sup> May and closes 24 August 2023

We hope that most of the ECE sector made up of 4,579 ECE providers, along with teachers and parents sign the petition. This will be presented to MPs on 25<sup>th</sup> August on the Parliamentary grounds at 9:45am as part of the Ketekete Mai, Make a noise for ECE! Conference organised by Childspace and Te Rito Maioha. The petition will then be presented and considered by the new Parliament after the general election.

## Why are ratios important?

- When children are younger, they need more dedicated attention to stay safe and have their needs tended to. This is why the current ratio in Early Childhood Education (ECE) for under twos has fewer children per teacher than for older children (one to five). A human being is an infant until they are three years old. Our current model leaves 2-3 year old children as the lowest funded group but these children have all the needs of under two year old children (nappy changing, developing language and social skills).
- However, the ratios were arbitrarily set in the 1960s and then 1990s with no evidence or research. Successive governments have promised action but have never delivered.
- Lowering the children to teacher ratios in early childhood education is required urgently
- Lower ratios are widely accepted by educators, ECE providers and the Ministry of Education, as being beneficial for children because:
  - Lower ratios ensure that teachers are able to focus on a child when they require attention eg when they are upset, hurt or need changing.
  - Lower ratios support child-staff relationships and allow staff to focus more on the needs of the individual child.

- Lower ratios reduce the amount of unsupervised time that occurs when needing to deal with disruptions such as changing nappies and clothes, accidents etc.
- Research suggests that the quality of interactions between adults and children play a highly important role in stimulating early learning. In high quality interactions, adults are genuinely interested in what the child is doing.
- A higher number of children to teachers can make teaching more about managing the environment, routines and undertaking safety checks, rather than having the time and space to spend time with a child helping them to learn. Higher numbers of children increase noise levels, can lead to higher temperatures and overcrowding.
- A higher number of children creates significant stress on kaiako (teachers), and are a factor in burnout, staff retention, and are off putting for job applicants. There is a significant shortage of ECE teachers and better conditions are required to encourage people to train and reduce health and safety concerns.
- Many high quality providers have already put in place lower children to teacher ratios, funding this through parental fees or reduced profit margins. Regulating for a lower ratio will ensure a better baseline of service, while supporting those centres that refuse to teach to the outdated ratios.
- The government must also appropriately fund the ECE sector to deliver lower ratios, along with Pay Equity and Pay Parity by urgently replacing the outdated, dysfunctional ECE funding model to meet the real needs of today's working whānau, tamariki and ECE services. The government also needs to tackle teacher shortages with a meaningful strategic workforce plan to attract, retain and develop a professional, culturally responsive ECE teaching workforce from within Aotearoa New Zealand, and simplify regulations to support quality education delivery without over-burdening ECE services with labour-intensive administration demands from multiple agencies.

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