Briefing Note: Release of 2018 Early Childhood Education Census results

To: Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 30 November 2018

Priority: Medium

Security Level: In Confidence

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Messaging seen by Communications team: Yes

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note that the initial results of the 2018 Early Childhood Education Census are ready for public release. These results include a number of tables to be released on Education Counts, along with two-page summaries on particular topics such as attendance and teaching staff.

Summary

- The annual early childhood education (ECE) census is a snapshot data collection from New Zealand ECE services across one week per year. In 2018, the census week was 18 to 24 June. This briefing informs you of key results for the 2018 collection prior to public release.

- Overall, both the number of children attending ECE in the census week and the number of ECE services decreased between 2017 and 2018. The number of teaching staff increased. The findings are consistent with earlier census reports, and some trends apparent in previous years have continued.

- These results have been discussed at the Ministry’s ECE Data and Evidence Advisory Committee meeting on November 22, and will be ready for release on the Education Counts website from the week beginning December 17. We will work with your office on the timing of this release.

- We have prepared key questions and answers for the release communications (attached as Annex 1), and will continue to work closely with your office ahead of the release.

Rochelle Barrow  
Acting Deputy Secretary  
Evidence, Data and Knowledge

30/11/2018

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
18/12/18
Background

1. This Briefing Note addresses the 2018 ECE Census data release notified in the Indicative Early Learning and Schooling Annual Data Release Schedule (METIS 1125305).

2. The annual ECE census is a data snapshot from New Zealand early learning services across one week per year, typically the last week in June, though some information is also drawn from other data sources the Ministry maintains. The data enables the Ministry to analyse changes within the sector to inform policy advice and expenditure forecasts. The results are made available on Education Counts, to stakeholders, researchers and the general public.

3. Prior to 2014 the information was collected via a paper form submitted by services. With the development of the Early Learning Information system (ELI) a shift to electronic capture and submission became possible. Overall, this was a positive change as it minimised the collection burden on services and the Ministry.

4. The change in collection method means that some data is not comparable before and after 2014. Where data is not comparable, time series breaks are indicated in graphs (red dashed line). Alongside the 453 kōhanga reo there are a small number of services which still return their information in paper form. As more services move to using ELI there may be shifts in future results caused by collection differences. However, we take all steps to ensure there is comparability over time.

5. Previously census results have been released as part of a large written commentary and public release of data tables. Keen interest from users to access this data as soon as possible means we plan to release summary results and data tables now. We will then work with key internal and sector stakeholders to determine the areas of interest for more detailed analysis. These detailed reports will be published next year.

6. There were 5,201 responses to the 2018 ECE Census, a response rate of 97.7%. The majority of services (78%) used ELI to return their census; 96% of paper-based forms were submitted by playgroups that do not connect to ELI and kōhanga reo responses, which are filed in bulk by Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust. This is the first year that all playcentres filed their ECE returns electronically.

7. The shift of playcentres to ELI from paper forms had led to changes in the attendance measure of playcentres. Prior to this year, playcentres filed paper-based returns which collected the number of children who should attend the playcentre during the return week. In 2018, with the shift to electronic forms, playcentres reported actual attendance not projected attendance. This has led to a small decrease in playcentre attendance numbers between 2017 and 2018, in line with the changes seen for other service types during the transition from paper to electronic census returns.

Findings from the 2018 ECE Census data collection

Attendance

8. Overall attendance at licensed ECE services have fallen from 202,772 children in last year's Census to 200,793 children in 2018.

9. The population of children aged 0-4 years was 306,390 in 2018, and 64.4% of New Zealand children aged 0-4 years attended a licensed ECE service in the census week.

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1 Taken from StatsNZ population projections. The 2017 population of children aged 0-4 years was 305,970, so while the population of young children is increasing the percentage who attended ECE in census week decreased.
10. Younger children (under the age of 1) are less likely to attend ECE, and older children more likely; approximately 96.3% of children aged 4 years attended ECE during the census week.

11. Education and care services and kindergartens accounted for 67% of attendances in 2018.

12. The average weekly hours of attendance increased from 20 hours and 45 minutes in 2017 to 21 hours and 27 minutes in 2018. Average hours of attendance have been steadily increasing since 2015.

13. Home-based ECE services have the longest average weekly attendance hours in 2018 (24 hours and 44 minutes), while playcentres have the shortest (4 hours and 11 minutes).

**Services**

14. The overall number of licensed ECE services has decreased from 4,567 services in 2017 to 4,532 services in 2018.

15. There has been an increase in the number of education and care services to 2,584 (up from 2,558 in 2017), while all other service types have seen a decrease in their numbers.

16. The most significant waiting times for an ECE placement are seen in Gisborne. Over half of the 42 ECE services (excluding kōhanga reo) in Gisborne have waiting times for enrolments of 3 year olds (21% of services have waiting times of up to a month; 17% have waiting times of between 1 to 6 months, and 14% have waiting times over 6 months).

17. The West Coast is the region which has the lowest proportion of ECE services (excluding kōhanga reo) with waiting times. Of these services, 19 have no waiting for enrolments of 3 year olds, while the other 7 have waiting times (3 services have a wait of up to a month, 3 services between 1 and 6 months, and 1 service has a waiting time of over 6 months).

**Language use in ECE**

18. There were 655 ECE services in 2018 that offered either bilingual (51-80% of teaching time) or immersion (81-100% of teaching time) language instruction in a language other than English. This was a decrease of 1 service from 2017.

19. There were 453 kōhanga reo in 2018, which accounted for the majority of immersion ECE services. Excluding kōhanga reo, there were 111 bilingual and 91 immersion services covering a range of languages.

20. Te reo Māori, Tongan, Samoan and Northern Chinese languages are the most commonly spoken in bilingual or immersion ECE services. There are no services offering bilingual or immersion ECE in New Zealand Sign Language.

**Teaching staff**

21. The number of teaching staff across ECE services in New Zealand increased from 38,186 in 2017 to 39,118 in 2018 (including home-based educators). The majority of teaching staff are at education and care services.

22. In 2018, 57% of all teaching staff were qualified, up from 56% in 2017.
   a. Home-based services have a high proportion of educators without ECE qualifications – in 2018, 90% of home-based educators did not have an ECE
qualification and 10% did. In 2017, only 7% of home-based educators had an ECE qualification.

b. If home-based educators are excluded, 21,467 (68%) of the remaining 31,418 teaching staff are qualified, down from the 69% that was reported in 2017.

ECE in low socioeconomic areas

23. There are more ECE services in low socioeconomic areas compared to high socioeconomic areas (based on comparing NZ Dep Index 9 and 10 areas with NZ Dep 1 and 2 areas).

24. Kōhanga reo account for a higher proportion of services in low socioeconomic areas, and playcentres account for a higher proportion of services in high socioeconomic areas. Education and care services account for the largest proportion of services in all areas, regardless of socioeconomic level.

25. A higher number of children attend ECE services in low socioeconomic areas (reflecting the number of services in each area), and Māori and Pacific children account for a larger proportion of children who attend ECE services in low socioeconomic areas than in high socioeconomic areas.

26. Waiting times are longer in high socioeconomic areas. Over half of all ECE services in NZ Dep 1 areas (high socioeconomic/least deprived areas) have waiting times for enrolments of 3 year olds (with 12% of services in these areas having waiting times of over 6 months), compared to 33% of ECE services in NZ Dep 10 areas (low socioeconomic/most deprived areas, where 4% of services have waiting times of over 6 months).

Communications Approach

27. The census report contains information about a number of aspects of early learning, including teachers – their qualifications and background, numbers of children, service types, hours attended and languages spoken.

28. The findings in this year’s report are broadly consistent with previous years’.

29. We can expect any media interest in the data to be limited.

30. Policy changes in a number of areas, including qualified teacher ratios, have already been signalled following the launch of the Strategic Plan for Early Learning earlier this month.

31. A brief Q&A has been attached (see Annex 1) should we need to respond to queries.

Next Steps

32. The attached Annexes 2 to 6 will be released as individual reports on Education Counts, along with detailed data tables.

33. More detailed reports on specific areas of interest within the 2018 ECE Census will be released throughout 2019. These reports will have supporting information drawn from other Ministry databases to better contextualise the ECE sector in New Zealand.
34. We recommend that this Briefing Note is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: Communications: key questions and answers
Annex 2: Overview of attendance at licensed ECE services in 2018
Annex 3: Overview of licensed ECE services in 2018
Annex 4: Overview of bilingual and immersion language use in ECE in 2018
Annex 5: Overview of ECE teaching staff in 2018
Annex 6: Overview of Early Childhood Education in low socioeconomic areas in 2018