



Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Inc

The enduring impact of early childhood education should not be underestimated.

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“Moves to reduce funding for this important educational initiative may offer short term cost savings but could result in long term social and economic costs” says ANZASW. “Particularly, it could be detrimental to the Government’s commitment to reduce crime and youth offending as attending preschool is found to reduce future criminal activity”.

Findings of economic evaluations of Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes report that the benefits of public spending on these programmes exceed their costs. Therefore the cost review of ECE in the upcoming budget and reported reductions in childcare subsidies (reduced by \$57 million) is likely to restrict access to a programme that has a positive impact for our future society.

Attending quality ECE has long term social and economic impact, particularly for disadvantaged children:-

- Reduced criminal activity –criminal activity has been found to reduce by up to a half compared to the non- ECE cohort, particularly for males. This therefore offers the potential to reduce future costs of the justice system and related areas, where the average cost of imprisonment is \$90,977 per year.
- Participation in ECE produces positive gains in terms of learning and educational achievement, with greater numbers of preschoolers gaining high school qualification and beyond. As a consequence, improving employment opportunities and greater lifetime earnings occur.
- Achieving greater financial independence reduces the need for welfare support and dependency, reducing future social welfare costs.
- Improved positive parenting and support.

The enduring impact of early childhood education should not be underestimated. This evidence offers a compelling argument why quality early childhood education should continue to be widely supported and accessible to all children for the benefit New Zealand Society.

In tandem, improving accessibility and affordability for lower socio-economic groups is also vital and welcomed as these children are shown to gain most from participating in quality early childhood education. Supporting and encouraging families to send their children to preschool, and ensuring quality ECE is locally available, will therefore be an important element of the Whanau Ora programme.

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