The National Picture: What does the ECE census 2017 tell us about ECE services?

There is continued growth in the sector with an increased number of ECE providers, most notably for services offering education and care, and home-based services.

About ECE services

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) census is administered every year and provides a snapshot of high level statistics for ECE in New Zealand. Data captured is for a one week period, typically the last week in June and includes information about service providers, enrolment/attendance numbers, teaching staff, and the use of languages.

There are different kinds of ECE services offering education and care to children from birth to school age. These services can either be ‘teacher-led’, ‘whānau-led’, or ‘parent-led’. All ECE services must be licenced or certified by the Ministry of Education.

Teacher-led services need to have at least 50% of teaching staff who are qualified and certified as ECE teachers. Teacher-led services include kindergartens, education and care services, home-based education and care, and Te Kura (the Correspondence School).

‘Whānau-led’ or ‘Parent-led’ means that whānau, parents and caregivers are involved in educating and caring for their children. Te Kōhanga Reo are whānau-led services offering a Māori environment for tamariki and their whānau. Parent-led services includes Playcentres and Playgroups.
Key findings

- There were 5,527 licensed or certificated ECE services and kōhanga reo as at June 2017 (up 1.1% from 2016). Of these, 4,600 were licensed services and kōhanga reo (up 59 from 2016) and 927 were certificated playgroups (no change from 2016).

- Education and care services made up a majority of licensed services with 2,558 services (55.6%). There were 658 kindergartens (14.3%), 454 kōhanga reo (9.9%), 476 home-based services (10.3%), and 421 playcentres (9.2%).

- The number of education and care services have grown by 45.8% (804 services) and the number of home-based services has grown by 136.8% (275 services) since 2005.

- Twenty-six percent of licensed services reported a wait time of more than one month, well down from the peak of 45.7% in 2008. However wait times at kindergartens remain relatively high with 38.8% reporting wait times of more than one month (down 2.7% from 2016).

Figure 1: Proportion of licensed services, by service type, 2005-2017