



**Name of advisory group:**

Early Childhood Ministerial Advisory Group via Minister Chris Hipkins

**Full title of the bill or matter under consideration:**

Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008

**Purpose of this submission**

I (Celia Hogan, Little Kiwis Nature Play) am proposing changes to the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 that would enable nature-based early childhood education in New Zealand.

Day excursions are currently possible but forest or nature kindergartens, similar to those in Europe, Scandinavia and other parts of the world, are not possible under the current regulations. This is mainly because of the legislation's focus on inside space.

I will share with you more information about what forest / nature kindergartens are, their benefits, how they work, what exactly is being proposed, how it could look in New Zealand, who supports this, and possible next steps for consideration.

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## 1. My background – Celia Hogan

My name is Celia Hogan and I am an advocate for nature-based education in the early years. I originally studied Outdoor Recreation and Adult Education. For the past 20 years I have worked for a variety of outdoor education organisations internationally, setting up, developing, running and teaching in outdoor programmes, wilderness expeditions, leadership development programmes and establishing risk management and safety systems.

I learnt about forest kindergartens when a friend's daughter started attending one in Scotland. Having my own small children, I really wanted to give them a nature kindy experience. But I couldn't find any in Christchurch, or New Zealand, and with further research I found that the legislation was problematic.

I was motivated and inspired to run nature play holiday sessions myself for preschools in Christchurch where children would come along with a caregiver and enjoy a morning of nature play. Through these sessions I built up some great relationships and a nature play community which didn't stop at Christchurch. People from all over New Zealand started to follow my Facebook page.

One thing led to another and I started passing on my knowledge to early years and primary educators (both teachers and parents) to help them either set up and run nature-based programmes or build confidence to take their own children outdoors more.

I am often asked by educators how they can set up full-time nature programmes and I am asked by parents when I am going to set up a nature-based ECE programme.

Over the past 9 months I have travelled around New Zealand meeting and visiting educators and hosting small events to see what programmes other centres are running and to find out what educators are wanting to do. In the meantime, I have built up a network of nature educators in New Zealand through a private Facebook group (Nature Educators NZ) which has grown to 600 people and has become a place of support and information sharing.

From this Facebook group I have pulled together a handful of people to start establishing Working Guidelines for Nature Education in the Early Years in New Zealand. I see this as a vital support step for the legislation change to progress, as there is currently no recommendation of skills required for running nature education in the early years.

These guidelines would be helpful to educators who don't know exactly what upskilling or professional development they need to be able to confidently manage a preschool aged group in a natural environment.

These guidelines wouldn't just help guide educators under this proposed legislation change, they would also help educators who are currently running one-day-a-week excursion programmes from their centres and provide guidance for them too.

I am one of the founding members of a new not-for-profit organisation called Children in Nature New Zealand. This will provide a hub for nature educators in New Zealand as a source of information, research, networking, professional development training and anything else that will support the New Zealand nature educator.

## 2. Nature kindergartens – what are they and how do they work?

Forest or nature kindergartens are a type of kindergarten 'without traditional ceilings or walls'. Nature kindergartens operate mainly in the bush or local parks, reserves or beaches. No matter the weather or the season, children spend a majority of their time learning and playing outside in the natural environment.

*"There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing."*

Children dress appropriately for the weather including thermals, waterproof clothes, warm socks, gumboots and gloves in the winter. Alternatively, if the weather requires it, sunhats, covered tops, sunscreen and warm tops/rain jackets. Clothing is one of the keys to success.

Shelter would always be available, especially from extreme weather or adverse conditions. When we refer to shelter it can be in a basic form, without the need for electricity or plumbing e.g. a yurt or a tent; however, some have a fully powered site. The shelter can also be a place to store any equipment needed or as a pick-up and drop-off point.

One feature of nature kindergartens is that nature provides its own toys (Vygotsky, 1976). Sticks become wands, fishing rods, swords or walls for a hut. Rocks become animals, food, cars or babies. Holes in the ground become birds' nests, hills become castles and bushes can be homes. Creativity is at the centre of a child's time in nature. This fits well with the holistic nature of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Children's play happens naturally within the environment and children should be allowed to explore their environment, after a hazard check and discussion with the children has occurred. If an emergency presents itself, whistles can be used to call children back.

Tamariki learn best when they are engaged in the real world. One of the great benefits of nature-based programmes is that children are involved in the risk management, the management of any equipment, care for the local environment and the wellbeing of the group.

Having children problem solving alongside their teachers or being jointly responsible for the site and its risk management, makes group management much easier in an environment that could be perceived as more challenging than a traditional classroom or playground. It also supports children in learning to self-assess risk and develop a sense of agency (Gill, 2007).

**The Danish Forest School approach** is renowned for its innovative teaching methods and informal learning environments, which promote creativity and critical thinking among students (Williams-Sieghedsen, 2017). Each 'forest school' is unique rather than following a standard structure.

The Danish model has been inspired by the pioneer Friedrich Froebel and 7 pedagogical principles have developed:

1. **A holistic approach to children's learning and development.** This approach is concerned with the development of every child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative and spiritual potential. It seeks to engage children in the learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibility.

2. ***Each child is unique and competent.*** Every child is unique and competent in their own way, and the way they think, feel and interact with others reflects this. Some children are outgoing, while some are shy; some like physical activities, while others love stories and music. To view the child as unique and competent is to view their potential. Children need an environment in which to flourish and grow their positive self-esteem.
3. ***Children are active and interactive learners.*** Children's active engagement in the learning process and their engagement with others in interactive activities or engagement with materials forms the dynamics for knowledge and understanding. Through active learning, children are constantly changing, adjusting, and rearranging meaning and understanding of things.
4. ***Children need real-life, first-hand experiences.*** Children are observers and explorers by nature and through real-life, first-hand experiences they develop an understanding of themselves and the environment they are in. A child's all-round physical, emotional, linguistic, cognitive and sensory development is fostered through first-hand experiences.
5. ***Children thrive in child-centred environments.*** A child-centred environment considers children's daily lives – including the need for restful areas, places for children who need sleep-time, and creative areas. There should be an interconnectedness between indoors and outdoors, and an understanding that children need to be in harmony with the environment.
6. ***Children need time to experiment and develop independent thinking.*** Children need time to play and explore and experiment with their ideas and knowledge. They need to try things out, make mistakes, try something else, repeat their play, and consolidate ideas.
7. ***Learning comes from social interactions.*** Children experience positive social relationships through daily interactions with responsive and affectionate adults. This helps children develop self-confidence, to communicate and to master challenges in their world. (Early Horizons Magazine, 2017)



### 3. Why nature-based early childhood education in New Zealand?

Children today are less active and more sedentary than previous generations, with limited opportunities to spend regular time in nature (Gerritsen, Morton & Wall, 2016). With parents' busy lives and our children spending more time in childcare centres than ever before, children do not get to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents had.

This is having a detrimental effect on our children. We are seeing children becoming weaker, less resilient and less creative. From a much younger age children are suffering from mental health problems (Cohen, 2013), obesity (NZ Health Statistics, 2016/17), oral language developmental issues (Riley, 2014), anxiety and stress (Cohen, 2013).

Teachers are noticing a real lack of core strength in children and it is impacting on their fine motor skills which includes holding a pencil or crayon. Children are even falling off chairs.

Primary school teacher Antony Paine says, "They need to lean on both arms to hold themselves up and some children even fall off their classroom chairs. We're not encouraging kids to be physical human beings. They spend too much time indoors watching TV and sitting on computers and don't get enough physical exploration play." (Article 1, 2018)

While 73% of children growing up a decade ago played outside more than they did inside, the equivalent proportion of children today is just 13% and as many as 10 per cent only engage in outdoor play once a week or less (Planet Ark, 2011).

*"Nature is its own teacher"*

There is a movement happening in New Zealand right now as whanau and Kaiako recognise the benefits that nature has to offer and visibly see the incredible changes it makes in the lives of their tamariki.

#### 4. What are the benefits of nature-based early childhood education?

Nature can not only heal our children it can build confidence, resilience and is beneficial for their overall mana atua. There are so many benefits that nature play can offer, including:

##### **Physical activity**

- When children have regular time in the outdoors, including forests, parks, and playgrounds, they have opportunities to release stress, play vigorously, and directly explore nature, which in turn provides physical and psychological benefits (Frost, 2010; Jacobi-Vessels, 2013; Louv, 2005).
- For children, greenspaces are an important environmental influence on physical activity and emotional wellbeing (Ward, Duncan, Jarden, Stewart, 2016).



##### **Mental health and overall wellbeing**

- Reduced stress. Green plants and vistas reduce stress among highly stressed children. Locations with a greater number of plants, greener views, and access to natural play areas show more significant results (Wells and Evans, 2003).
- Nature Supports multiple development domains. Nature is important to children’s development in every major way—intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically (Kellert, 2005).
- The natural environment is fundamentally important to both our physical and psychological wellbeing, so actions that promote and protect our natural environment help to increase our ability to flourish in life. In turn, people and communities that are flourishing, i.e. have high levels of wellbeing, tend to be environmentally responsible in their behaviour and can, therefore, contribute to environmental sustainability. (Auckland: Mental Health Foundation Publication, 2011)
- Maggie Barry (Conservation Minister, 2015) says, “The links with improved physical and mental health are proven and well established. People feel less stressed, more relaxed and refreshed when they venture into the outdoors, whether they are exercising or helping to contribute to a worthwhile conservation project.” (Article 2, 2015)
- “Spending time in nature improves our wellbeing,” says Mental Health Foundation (MHF) chief executive Judi Clements. “It’s not just something that’s nice to do – it’s actually good for you! ... There’s a growing interest in people receiving ‘eco-therapy’ when they’re feeling low. We benefit from being in nature, taking notice of the beauty that is around us, connecting with others and being active. It helps us to feel relaxed,

take an interest in other people and improves our sense of wellbeing,” she says. (Article 2, 2015)

- Evidence suggests that not only are people dependent on the natural environment for material needs such as food and water, but also that the natural environment is equally essential for fulfilling psychological, spiritual and emotional needs (Maller, Townsend, Pryor, Brown & St Leger, 2006). Therefore, it seems crucial that mental health promotion should acknowledge the importance of ensuring access to natural environments and protecting these areas for our wellbeing (Article 2, 2015.)
- There is a great advantage of germs for your child’s developing immune system. Microbial exposure and increased microbial burden is beneficial for wellness. (Gilbert, J. Knight, R. 2017)
- Exposure to germs in childhood is thought to help strengthen the immune system and protect children from developing allergies and asthma. The study supports the 'hygiene hypothesis', which contends that such auto-immune diseases are more common in the developed world where the prevalence of antibiotics and antibacterials reduce children’s exposure to microbes. Eating dirt and playing in the mud are thought to confer protection from allergies and asthma. (Olszak, T. et al. 2012)
- You can only catch a cold virus from another person and that’s much more likely to happen indoors where viruses find it easier to jump around. Most scientists think the main reason we catch colds more often in winter is because we all spend a lot more time cosied up together. (Next Magazine. 2011).



### **Social emotional skills**

- Play, particularly free, unstructured and outdoors is essential for healthy brain and socio-emotional development and in the early years of life is far more important than direct instruction (Frost, 1998; Szalavitz and Perry, 2010).
- Improves social relations. Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the outdoors (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005).
- Having regular contact with natural outdoor environments plays a pivotal role in promoting children’s health and wellbeing. (Armitage, 2009; Jacobi-Vessels, 2013; Kernan & Devine, 2010; Louv, 2005; Robinson & Wadsworth, 2010)



### ***Creativity and problem solving***

- Nature supports creativity and problem solving. Studies of children in schoolyards found that children engage in more creative forms of play in the green areas. They also play more cooperatively in the natural environment (Bell and Dymont, 2006). Play in nature is especially important for developing capacities for creativity, problem solving and intellectual development (Kellert, 2005).
- Play actually changes the structure of the developing brain in important ways, strengthening the connections of the neurons (nerve cells) in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain considered to be the executive control centre responsible for solving problems and making plans and regulating emotions. (Pellis, Pellis and Himmler 2014)



### ***Environment and culture***

- Creating a play experience outside on a regular basis will not only educate our children about where their curiosity may take them, it also feeds a deeper connection to our natural environment. Instilling these connections in this new generation is of most importance to our kaitiakitanga and environmental sustainability (Ministry of Education, 2017).
- Wilson (2012) outlines how the early childhood years are fundamental in developing “environmental attitudes and a commitment to caring for the Earth” (p. 87). The natural world can give children instant responses to their curiosity through all their senses as they touch, taste, smell, see and hear what is going on around them. Such connections tend to foster an ethic of care for the natural environment and the life systems within it (Phenice and Griffore, 2003). Positive experiences in nature can support children to develop the understanding that humans are interconnected with the earth and its life supporting systems, and that all humans have a responsibility to ensure its survival for future generations (Chawla, 2007).
- Time in nature is not leisure time; it’s an essential investment in our children’s health. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading (Louv, 2005).

- Research has shown that empathy with and love of nature grows out of children’s regular contact with the natural world. Hands-on, informal, self-initiated exploration and discovery in local, familiar environments are often described as the best ways to engage and inspire children and cultivate a sense of wonder. These frequent, unstructured experiences in nature are the most common influence on the development of lifelong conservation values. (DOC, 2011)



**Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills**

- Access to play improves classroom behaviour and academic performance (Pellegrini and Smith, 1998) and enhances children’s readiness to learn, their learning behaviours and their ability to problem solve (Ginsburg, 2007).



**Risk management skills**

- Nature provides children with age appropriate risky play opportunities which allows them to understand their own limitations, develop their problem-solving skills, and it teaches them to overcome fears and anxieties.
- The opportunity for risk taking improves children’s competencies in risk management and risk perception. In addition, social skills may be enhanced through opportunities for collaboration with older peers, as children collectively decide and learn how to manage risk. (Bundy et al., 2009)
- Risky play helps children to learn to manage their own safety and move around comfortably (Knight, 2009).



***For the future of our tamariki***

- In other parts of the world, full-time nature education programmes are well established in ECE. These countries include Sweden, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, England, Scotland, Wales, America and Australia. They are often called forest kindergartens. The benefits are not just immediate but long term and with the early years being a critical time for brain development, supported nature-based play is a must for New Zealand.



## 5. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)

The New Zealand government was issued the UNCROC’s General Comment on Article 31 in 2011, which passed in 2013. The General Comment provides further guidance to world governments on implementation of Article 31.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) and the follow-up discussion paper prepared by International Play Association (IPA) World on Children’s Right to Play and the Environment, 2016 asserted that certain conditions need to be assured if children are to realise their Article 31 rights fully. (IPA Support Letter, 2018)

Factors include:

- Freedom from stress, social exclusion, prejudice or discrimination.
- An environment secure from social harm and violence, and sufficiently free from pollution, traffic and other hazards that impede free and safe movement.
- Availability of rest and leisure time, as well as space that is free from adult control and management.
- Space to play outdoors in diverse and challenging physical environments, with access to supportive adults, when necessary.
- Opportunities to experience, interact with and play in natural environments and the animal world. (See full list of factors <http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/IPA-PlayEnvironment-Discussion-Paper.pdf>)

The Ministry of Education can take this ‘opportunity for change’ to explore ways in which current legislation Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 and Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008, could be developed to enable full-time nature-based early care and education services/programmes in New Zealand. (IPA Support Letter, 2018)



## 6. What is currently happening in New Zealand?

In New Zealand ECE there is a growing trend to start up nature discovery programmes. These nature discovery programmes are generally happening 1 day a week and for a couple of centres twice a week. They are run from centres as day excursions. Most walk from their centre but some have vans or use buses that transport the children and others have parents drop children directly to the sites.

These excursions mainly happen for the 8-12 oldest children in a centre. This means that they may only get this opportunity for 6 months before they head to school. Some centres are running two a week to capture two different groups of 8-12 children. There is one centre that I am aware of that takes their entire centre each time.



## 7. Current barriers in New Zealand

- Logistically these excursions can be challenging, especially if a site is not within walking distance from a centre.
- Buses can be too expensive for certain centres when there is nothing within walking distance.
- If a kindergarten is running half day sessions it becomes a tight timeframe to get children ready, head out and get back for pick-ups at 11.30 and teachers' lunch rosters.
- Confidence is a barrier for some educators. I hear from educators who say they know the importance of getting children out into nature, but they just don't have the confidence and feel they need to have more skills.
- Paperwork can be a challenge. Filling in the excursion paperwork in enough time to be approved (especially for the corporate centres where forms need to be emailed off for approval) can prevent trips from occurring if the person at the other end doesn't make it a priority.
- Getting permission forms filled in and handed back in time for a session is important and if not done can cause ratio problems. For example, if a child hasn't been given permission and they need to stay back at centre but ratios were worked out for them to be off site then this could mean that the whole group is unable to go in some situations.
- Ratios can be a barrier especially if a centre is operating at the ratios 1:6 or 2:20. Most teachers would not feel comfortable leaving their centre with that ratio. They rely on parent support, which works well at centres that have more stay-at-home or part-time working parents. This becomes a challenge in areas where there are full-time working families.
- There is currently professional development available in New Zealand, but it is not clear what a baseline skillset for nature education looks like, so educators aren't sure what they should be doing to upskill for their excursion programmes. Creating Working Guidelines for Nature Education in the Early Years in New Zealand will support this and enable professional development to be specific for the needs of the nature educator.
- Legislation is a barrier for the centres who want to set up full-time programmes.

## 8. Background to proposed change

Over the past couple of generations early childhood education has changed from being mainly in the home to being mainly within an early childhood education centre. Alongside this change we have seen changes in urban layouts, the introduction of technology into everyday life and a cotton wool wrapping of our children through fear of the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015).

Through all this we are seeing children who are not having experiences of nature and free play within a natural environment. Aside from all the developmental benefits, if we want to protect our environment and be sustainable in our practices, we need to feel a connection with Papatūānuku (Mother Earth). If children are not spending time in nature, then they won't be connected to nature and in turn they won't become Kaitiakitanga (future guardian of the land).

Around New Zealand we are seeing centres set up regular weekly excursions heading out into nature as part of their programmes. While this is wonderful and exactly what is needed there is also a need for the next step. The next step is a nature-based ECE.

## 9. Proposed changes

- I am proposing an addition to the Regulations: To add a new licence for ‘nature-based’ early childhood education centres in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008.
- Changes would be required under Clause 44 Qualification, Ratios and Service Size and clause 45 Premises and Facilities standard in relation to this new license type.
- For a nature-based licence these clauses would need amendments / considerations:
  - Heating and ventilation
  - Lighting
  - Noise control
  - Premises
  - Food prep/eating
  - Sleeping
  - Storage
  - Toileting
  - Washing
- Amendments to Schedules 1, 2, 3 and 4 would likely need to be made especially Schedule 4: Activity spaces (minimum). For a nature-based early childhood education centre the indoor square metre per child allowance would need to be addressed with a recommendation for basic shelter instead (Graph 1).

**Graph 1 (Taken from current regulations):**

Service	Activity space required
Early childhood education and care centre	Indoor—2.5 sq m per child Outdoor—5 sq m per child or a minimum number of sq m per child determined under regulation 54(3)
Home-based education and care service	Indoor—10 sq m in one area Outdoor—must have some outdoor space
Hospital-based education and care service	Indoor space requirement for activity rooms—1 space of at least 20 sq m of usable space that is readily accessible by the children participating in the service that is large enough for 40% of the maximum number of children stated on the service’s licence and that gives each child at least 2.5 sq m of space Outdoor—outdoor space is not required

## 10. Addressing questions on the practicalities of nature-based ECE in NZ

- **Age range and hours**

There are many different models overseas. Many appear to take children from around 2.5/3 years up to 6 years old. The younger children tend to be offered half-day sessions (3 or 4 hours) and the older children are offered both sessions and longer 6-7-hour days. While sleeping arrangements are possible, having shorter sessions for the youngest children could be beneficial if they wanted to sleep at home. Having flexibility to offer sessions for younger ones and longer days to older ones seems to be what many centres do. I have seen one centre that offered a full 9-5pm day in Scotland, but I imagine there are others in the UK that offer the same.

- **Sleeping requirements**

Sleeping outside has several health benefits and is common in other parts of the world. Children sleeping inside in a heated room with recirculating air are more likely to get sick due to bacteria and germs present. Outdoor sleeping can reduce sickness and help with absence rates e.g. Little Learners in Australia reported over their 11-week trial of sleeping outdoors, they had a 0.84% absence rate during the months of April and May. (Little Learners, 2017)

For children who need sleep there are several options that exist. A Danish centre has a 4-sided shelter with no door, mattresses on the ground and sleeping bags available. It is protected from the elements and is well ventilated and is used all year round. Hammocks in trees could be something used in the summer time. For nature kindergartens that have a building / covered porch, sleeping on the porch is an option or setting up a sleeping tent. Another option, as current kindergartens do, is to have a shorter day option for the younger children e.g. 8.30-12.30pm.



- **Indoor space/shelter**

Some form of shelter would be required. Depending on the site and ownership this could be a built ply hut, use of a DOC hut, picnic shelter, modified shipping container, shed, caravan or a self-erected yurt tent or other large tent, tarp hut or earth huts like in forest schools. An example is Fiordland Kindergarten which uses an old large unused lawnmower shed for their group that heads out 2 days a week. The Scotland one I mentioned above has a yurt with pillows and blankets available and a fire in the middle – apparently it doesn't get used much but it is available as a quiet space for children but also crosses over as a place to get warm if needed.



- **Toileting**

Depending on the location and owners' requirements there are several options including use of public toilets, using a small portable toilet (as some currently do in NZ), a potty, digging a hole and burying waste, 'bush pee' or making a compostable toilet. There could be provision depending on the land ownership for digging a hole which is happening in New Zealand currently where private land is used. There would be different provisions for toilet trained versus nappy wearing children as the needs would be different.



- **Health practices**

Hygiene needs to be a consideration with toileting, food prep and eating. A system would need to be set up to enable children to wash their hands if there was no plumbing available. Access to water could be a requirement or consideration for this licence type. Having large containers with a tap at the bottom could be an option for a site without running water or drawing water from a stream.

Hand washing is not to get dirt off but to clean bacteria that has come from children's hands (most likely through contact with indoor spaces). Dirt contains the good antibodies we need for our immune systems.

New Zealand outdoor and nature programmes (including Outward Bound) current hygiene practices are:

- Hand Sanitiser for cleaning hands before eating or after toileting
- Bucket of soapy water and towel for cleaning hands before eating, preparing food or after toileting
- Towels washed every day
- Cooking equipment sterilised each day before being taken to site
- Food prep with clean equipment kept in a container and cleaned every day
- Cooking over a fire or with a BBQ

- **Toys and equipment**

Nature has its own toys in the form of sticks, stones, hills, mud, acorns, leaves etc. While some equipment might be useful it is not necessary. However, there might be

a need for some equipment and depending on the land ownership and location; a storage shed could be a useful asset. It could also double as a shelter if the size was adequate.

- **Emergency planning**

Just as in early childhood centres emergency plans would be put in place. These would be adapted to an outdoor environment and some specific guidelines or procedures would be required. Centres running one-day excursions already will have developed their emergency plans through their own risk management processes. There are several providers who specialise in this and could support a new nature-based centre in developing this documentation. It could also be something that is developed as part of the Working Guidelines for Nature Education in the Early Years in New Zealand, that is currently being worked on by myself and others.

- **Licensing requirements**

There would need to be training for those who visit nature-based centres for licensing purposes. This is to ensure that nature-based centres are being checked by individuals who understand the licensing requirements that would come with a nature-based centre. Someone who has visited/experienced European Forest Kindergartens or the New Zealand nature discovery programmes would be beneficial.

- **Ratios**

The current regulations state 1:6 or 2:20 for over 2s. Most centres operate their one-day nature excursions with a ratio of between 1:4 and 1:6. Norway manage their forest kindergartens with a ratio of 1:6. However, New Zealand's natural environment is different, and each site would require its own analysis for an appropriate ratio. With most centres currently taking out 10 children a 1:5 ratio would be recommended and would make emergency planning safer.

- **Adverse weather**

We need to be clear on what we mean by adverse weather. If we are talking about rain, then children would still be able to play outside as they would have the right clothing including warm layers and socks in winter with gumboots and waterproof over pants and jackets. With the requirement for some form of shelter children and their teachers should be able to move to their inside space when needed, e.g. for lunch. There would also be the option of setting up a tarp as shelter for lunch. For extreme weather there always needs to be a back-up plan. If it is not safe for children to be outdoors, then an extreme weather shelter will be required. This could be a local school hall, a scout or guide den or even a trip to the museum for the day. These could be classed as excursions and would be the same as an ECE centre going on their excursions currently.



- **Training and upskilling**

For full-time nature-based ECE further training would be required for educators. Extra skills required would be around risk management and group management in an outdoor environment, environmental education and possibly a higher level of first aid e.g. outdoor first aid course. Child Psychology or Outdoor Education could be an advantage as a background to one of the educators.

- **Safety**

Safety and the wellbeing of children is of very high importance. Ensuring that educators have the relevant experience and training in risk management and early childhood education or outdoor education will help keep children safe. We do however need to be able to differentiate between learning injuries and life altering injuries. Learning injuries are bumps, bruises, scratches, cuts and even the odd broken bone. Life altering injuries cause significant harm and are what we are aiming to avoid through good risk management practices.

One of the other key components to a nature programme is that it is not just the adults who are responsible for safety. The children and any parent or outside help are responsible too. It is a collective responsibility. This helps the children learn about risk management and that keeping safe is everyone's responsibility. This fits with the goal of developing confident capable learners.

- **Extreme heat**

Site choice is important and having access to shaded areas will be worth considering. There are also options to make tarp huts or use a yurt or other shelter when required. Currenting The Forest School in Auckland use the shade of trees and they have a yurt slightly lifted which allows air to ventilate through.



- **Commercial exploitation**

There is a risk of people wanting to set up nature-based ECEs as an ‘easier’ business model than the current early learning centre. Commercial exploitation seems to develop through minimum standards. For a nature-based ECE these standards could look like: that teachers have relevant qualifications, that all staff have attended relevant professional development training and first aid courses, that the site is large in nature with the ability for exploration, that the site has sufficient space for rest, and that there is a maximum-hours limit e.g. 7 hours, or they could be run as sessional.

- **Equality**

Many centres are purchasing over trousers and rain jackets for their outdoor programmes. This is a great way to make it accessible for all families. For other items of clothing op shops are a wonderful place to find good quality clothing at affordable prices. Encouraging communities to get on board is another option. Asking them for donations of specific items of clothing has worked for several centres e.g. gumboots, socks, thermal tops and bottoms.

- **Food and nutrition**

Different sites may have the ability to grow and cook their own food. Others will require children to bring their own lunches. Some might be able to do half and half. For cooking this could happen via a fire, BBQ or camping stove.



## 11. Links to the curriculum

The strands of Te Whāriki show the importance of fostering links with the natural world. Children will be supported to feel Whakamana (empowerment) through the ability to engage in a variety of experiences in nature and through being a valued member of a group.

The natural environment affords many opportunities to holistically develop children's intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, spiritual and physical development. Kotahitanga (holistic development) naturally happens for children when they are immersed in nature and actively engaged with natural environments and materials.

### **Te Whāriki strands and linking natural learning:**

#### Mana Aotūroa (exploration)

The child learns through active exploration of the environment.

The relationships of natural materials; of the senses. Exploring their local environment.

#### Mana Reo (communication)

The emotions of empathy, loving, sadness, fear, joy, surprise and wonder.

Use of responsive and reciprocal skills such as turn taking.

Ability to be creative and expressive through a variety of activities, such as imaginative play.

#### Mana Whenua (belonging)

Feeling a sense of place where there is a familiarity and security, knowing the unconditional love that comes from teachers, family/whānau; having the child's first language and culture acknowledged. Connection to the land, developing respect and aroha for Papatūānuku.

Developing an understanding of kaitiakitanga (guardianship, environmental stewardship) and the responsibilities of being a kaitiaki by, for example, caring for rivers, native forest and birds.

#### Mana Atua (wellbeing)

Good health promoted; emotional wellbeing (Mana Atua) nurtured, safe from harm.

Knowledge about how to keep themselves safe from harm and the ability to take risks.

Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs

#### Mana Tangata (contribution)

Equitable opportunities affirmed as individuals, relating to others; peaceful ways are best.

Awareness of the strategies they use to learn new skills and generate and refine working theories.

### **How nature-based ECE links to Te Whāriki**

#### **Science**

Children are engaged in science whenever they are learning about the world around them.

This type of play allows children to develop a perception of themselves as 'explorers' – competent, confident learners who ask questions and make discoveries.

Science and nature can help children to:

- learn to question and investigate
- think and act
- discover how nature works
- learn the correct names for animals, plants and nature
- care for the wellbeing of others, including plants.

Science and nature play support learning across all strands of Te Whāriki. It supports the exploration strand, where children learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning. They also develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds.

(education.govt.nz)

### ***Natural materials***

Natural resources are gifts from Papatūānuku (Mother Earth) and are fundamental learning experiences. Hands-on experiences with natural materials offer children opportunities to develop theories about how things work in the living, physical and material worlds.

Natural resources help children to:

- develop an appreciation and understanding of the natural world (animals and plants)
- develop a sense of curiosity
- share in the collection of materials for play
- develop a desire to experiment

All strands of Te Whāriki are supported when children explore with natural resources. They learn about the features of their natural environment and develop a sense of respect and responsibility for natural resources. They also learn about the important qualities of their environment that are significant to their family and wider community. Children develop working theories for making sense of the natural and physical world.

(education.govt.nz)

### ***Physically active play***

Outdoor activity and physical play help children release surplus energy, relieve stress and explore a stimulating environment – all of which enhance their wellbeing (Mana Atua). The importance of outdoor play can't be overstated.

Physically active play can help children to:

- develop large muscles, strength and balance
- develop flexibility and coordination including hand-eye coordination
- develop skills such as throwing, catching, hopping, skipping, climbing and balancing
- develop awareness of space, such as over/under, in front/behind, on top/beneath, inside/outside
- develop mathematical concepts such as long/short, big/small, wide/narrow
- be confident in controlling their bodies and learn their limits
- learn to cooperate and share
- understand that physical activity is fun and can release tension

Aside from the above, outside and active play also:

- encourage healthy risk taking
- helps children develop a lifelong habit of daily exercise
- gives children the chance to make lots of noise and have rough-and-tumble play
- introduces children to science and nature
- raises levels of vitamin D, which has many health benefits (including building strong bones)

Outside and active play relates to **all strands** of Te Whāriki. Within the exploration strand, children gain confidence in and control of their bodies. They develop increasing knowledge about how to keep physically healthy.

(education.govt.nz, teakoranga.org.nz)

### ***Sand and water play/element play***

A large sand area provides a place for small or large group learning experiences to occur, promoting socialisation and the development of pro social skills. Sand and water play develop young children's knowledge of the physical world and provides opportunities for creative expression.

Sand and water play helps children by:

- developing their physical dexterity
- encouraging cooperative play
- soothing and helping overactive children relax
- teaching the basic principles of science and maths
- attracting multiple ages and schemas
- stimulating dramatic play
- encouraging [mark making](#).

Sand and water play relate particularly to **Strand 5** of Te Whāriki, which is **exploration/Mana Aotūroa**.

(teakoranga.org.nz)

### ***Bicultural development in Nature***

Bicultural experiences help children:

- Understand and value their own and others' cultural identity
- Appreciate other languages, cultures and worldviews
- Learn another language (pre-school children are particularly receptive to learning new languages, without too much effort) appreciate their identity as New Zealanders, whether Māori or Pākehā

Story telling is an integral part of Maori culture. Weaving Maori legends and stories of Maori gods helps tamariki understand the importance of the land and environment to Maori.

Bicultural experiences relate to Te Whāriki strands **Mana Whenua (belonging)** and **Mana Tangata (contribution)**.

(teakoranga.org.nz)

### ***Dramatic play outside***

The outside environment is fertile ground for dramatic play. From pretending to be a famous explorer to family play in a tree hut, children can let their imaginations run wild.

Dramatic play helps children:

- develop social and language skills
- express positive and negative feelings
- learn to negotiate
- take turns and resolve conflict
- make sense of the world

Dramatic play supports learning across all strands of Te Whāriki, in particular, **Mana Reo (communication)**.

(teakoranga.org.nz)

### **Curriculum linking**

Linking nature-based programmes to Te Whāriki can be done using key competencies or within the curriculum strands.

Considering key competencies in a nature-based programme:

- exploration: had a question, created a solution, tested it, revised, evaluated
- communication: used language to express and summarise an evolving idea
- wellbeing: coordination and keeping ourselves safe
- contribution: offered solutions, used teamwork, sought out help as needed
- belonging: children are a part of supportive child-child and teacher-child relationships

These links can be demonstrated through learning stories to benefit learners and also benefit the programme. Here is an example of a learning story that demonstrates how Te Whariki is linked.

### **Example learning story - Playcentre Nature Play Session:**

#### **Chasing rainbows and baboons at the beach.**

Kia ora Florence, today we had our Outdoor session at the beach. We arrived and straight away you ran down the path with Jake, Jacob and Ollie. You were excited to see what you could find down at the water's edge. It was so nice to see you showing confidence with your friends. All eager to explore. The four of you made your way to the rocks at the beach. "This is our island!" you said. You and your buddies often revisit your island when we come to the beach and always find something new here. You concentrate very hard and take risks when you navigate across the slippery rocks. Today there was a beautiful rainbow in the distance. "A little bit of rain and a little bit of sun mean rainbows" you told me. Ka pai Florrie, you were really thinking about nature and your surroundings - Mana Aoturoa. You and Jake then scrambled up a steep, grassy bank. "There's a baboon and a weta!" Florrie said. "There's another baboon" Jake said. You both were standing together deep in imaginative play. Both of you then ran off after the baboons. Florence you were showing a great interest in the natural world today. Mana Aoturoa. Science, animals and nature. You were also showing great communication amongst your friends - Mana Reo. You were creative and expressive amongst your peers. Florrie I think you will continue to thrive on the outdoor session, exploring new and old areas where you and your imagination can run wild.



Story date: 14 Jun 2018.

Story by: Vanessa Goodwin

## 12. Case studies

I have included in the **appendix** three case studies of centres around the world who are currently running nature-based ECE. These will help give you some insight into how they run and what they focus on. The information has come directly from their websites.

### Summary of case studies:

- Fiddleheads Forest School is an entirely outdoor nature-based programme for children aged 3-5 years old. The programme runs out of Washington Botanic Gardens, Washington Park Arboretum, USA.
- The secret Garden Nursery is based in Fife, Scotland running a 49 week a year, 4.5 days a week from 8.30-5pm/8.30-1pm(F). It is based in a 25-acre woodland and offers explorative full-time outdoor play with a yurt for shelter.
- Waldkindergarten Immünster runs an 8-1pm daily forest kindergarten programme in Immunster, Germany with a construction trailer as their base beside the forest. A mixed age group of preschoolers where whole body learning is valued along with creativity, social learning, motor skills development, overall health and autonomy and democracy.



### 13. EXAMPLE of a current nature-based ECE pilot programme

#### Outdoor Preschool Pilot programme - Washington State, USA

In spring 2017 the Washington Legislature passed SB 5357 “Establishing a pilot project to license outdoor early learning and child care programs.” The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is excited by this project - to establish a pilot to analyze current models of outdoor preschools and adapt, when necessary, our licensing regulations to allow for the operation of outdoor early learning programs.

In researching the area of outdoor preschool, the legislature found that while there are upwards of 40 outdoor early learning programs in the state, all operate as part-day programs and are therefore not subject to child care licensing regulations. (Washington has a legislative provision that says that programs running under 4 hours are “license-exempt”). Many of these programs have expressed an interest in hosting full-day outdoor programs.

However, DCYF recognizes that many of our current licensing regulations are specifically geared towards the built, indoor environment. SB 5357 directs DCYF to establish a pilot to analyze current models of outdoor preschools and adapt, when necessary, our licensing regulations to allow for the operation of outdoor early learning programs.

Over the life of this pilot project, ensuring the health and safety of children will be our primary concern. Below is a brief outline of the scope of the pilot project:

- **Year 1, beginning July 2017:** recruiting pilot participants; organizing advisory committee; data collection and analysis of participants policies, procedures, and practices; developing outdoor setting licensing requirements; training participants staff; portable background check; submitting an annual report.
- **Year 2, beginning July 2018:** pilot full day services based on the outdoor setting licensing requirements; providing ongoing professional development and technical assistance; conducting pre and post compliance monitoring; providing ongoing data collection and analysis; engaging tribal care providers; developing pathway to Early Achievers; submitting an annual report.
- **Year 3, beginning July 2019:** engaging additional pilot participants; providing ongoing professional development and technical assistance; conducting compliance monitoring; providing ongoing data collection and analysis; implementing pathway to Early Achievers; submitting an annual report.
- **Year 4, beginning July 2020:** conducting final monitoring data collection and analysis; final complaint data analysis; providing ongoing professional development and technical assistance; submitting an annual report and developing final pilot recommendations.

Aliza Yair, M.Ed. is the Program Specialist for the Outdoor Preschool Pilot Program at the Department of Children, Youth and Families in the USA. I have spoken with her and she is more than happy to speak with anyone at government level who would like to understand more.

<https://del.wa.gov/Outdoor-Preschool>

#### 14. Letters of support from organisations within NZ and overseas

In support of this submission I have received letters from different educational organisations from within New Zealand and two international letters. Here is a list of the letters received with the full letters in the **appendix**.

- Nathan Wallis, Founder **X-Factor Education**, New Zealand
- Richard Louv, Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus and Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Executive Director **Children & Nature Network**, USA
- Associate Professor Scott Duncan, Head of Department, Physical Activity, Nutrition, and the Outdoors School of Sport and Recreation, **Auckland University of Technology**
- Dr Sue Elliott, ECE Researcher and Senior Lecturer and Course Co-ordinator, Early Childhood Education School of Education, **University of New England**, AUSTRALIA
- Dr. Ruud Kleinpaste MNZM, **Bugman**, New Zealand
- David Spraggs, Senior Teacher, **Gisborne Kindergarten Association**
- Jill Rice, President, **International Play Association (IPA)** Aotearoa New Zealand
- Jan Beatson, Founder, **Play and Learn Early Education Programmes**
- Pennie Brownlee, **Education for the Head and the Heart**, New Zealand
- Fiona McDonald, Co-Chair at **Education Outdoors NZ**
- Raewyn Penman, Manager Innovation & Collaboration, **Kidsfirst Kindergartens**
- Morgan Clode, Queenstown Farm School Coordinator, **Gems Educational Childcare**
- Leo Smith, Director, **Nature School NZ**
- Stacey Young, Kaiako at **Cherry's Early Learning Centre**, Christchurch
- Natalie Keogh, **Rainbow Cottage Early Childhood Centre**, Whangamata
- Maree Day, Early Childhood Coordinator and Dawn Brocks, Manager, **Southern REAP**
- Anna Gentry, Director, **Nature Play New Zealand**
- Tennille Murdoch, Founder and Lead Educator, **The Forest School**, Auckland
- Stacey Thompson, Owner, **Therm Limited**, Christchurch
- Gayle Croft, Centre Director and Kaiako, **Tiaki Early Learning Centre**, Rotorua
- Kim Tenebaum, Director, **TimberNook Christchurch**
- Emma Woods, Owner, **Woodland Escape**, Christchurch
- Stephanie Broomhall, Coordinator, **Prebbleton Playcentre**

#### Quotes from the letters of support:

- The socio-emotional basis of the early childhood curriculum means it has different needs and applications in practice than cognitive based curriculums for older children. Nature schools and the New Zealand environment are perfectly suited to this. I do not believe the current legislation was meant to exclude this, so this amendment would bring it into line with current practice and research. (Nathan Wallis, X-Factor Education)
- Worldwide, the time that children spend indoors is rising, as is ADHD, depression and obesity. Due to changing landscapes and cultural practices, children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did. (Richard Louv, Children and Nature Network)

- We believe that learners in Early Childhood Education should also be able to engage in EOTC easily. The current regulations appear to create barriers to this and hence we support this submission. (Fiona McDonald, EONZ)
- A large part of our motivation at Cherry's to run our excursions was observing the ever increasing disconnect between people and the land/tangata whenua and a desire from families, children and teachers to increase awareness of environmental issues. We see the significant gap and desire in the early childhood industry in Christchurch at this time, for more natural based programmes and centres, this change in legislation could aid those who want to fill that gap and meet that need do so. (Stacey Young, Cherry's ECE)
- We have always been keen to establish some wild kindergartens in the environment of the east coast where children would be outside every day in all weathers and working alongside trained teachers. I have played within the forest kindergartens of Norway, Denmark and Germany and have been a teacher for over 36 years. I fully support this initiative. David Spraggs, Gisborne Kindergarten Association
- Reworking of criteria to serve nature-based services would provide for enlightened provision where currently there are distinct gaps in services that meet the Rights of the Child - Article 31. (Jill Rice, IPA)
- I have observed positive changes in children's behaviour, social and communication skills as well as physical abilities... I have seen children who struggle to initiate play and build relationships in the boundaries of the classrooms four walls, socially thrive in the outdoors... We know that early intervention works, and we invest money in early intervention for children with learning difficulties and/or delayed speech, yet the "nature deficit disorder" (Richard Louv) has not yet been highlighted as an area of concern or need for support or funding to help get the children outdoors. (Morgan Clode, Gems Educational Childcare)
- I have been a registered teacher for many years and mentored many new teachers through their teaching placements; I would like to be able to take centre-based students and/or placement teaching students at Nature School NZ. Allowing us to have a licence would enable many students the awesome opportunity of having time learning from nature, alongside children learning from and through nature. (Leo Smith, Nature School NZ)
- We at Rainbow Cottage run two nature learning days a week, a bush kura programme and a beach kura programme and we see for ourselves the positive effects these programmes have for our tamariki ma. Being in the outdoors is particularly beneficial for our challenging children as it focuses and grounds their behaviour, in the words of early childhood expert Kimberly Crisp 'Children can't bounce off the walls if there are none!' (Natalie Keogh, Rainbow Cottage)
- As you know, I am a serious (and serial!) supporter of Nature-Time teaching, simply because we really need to restore our connection to "the Third teacher". Our ecological thinking has all but gone from the education system and if we are to re-discover the operations manual of planet Earth, we'll need to get back outside. (Dr. Ruud Kleinpaste, Bugman)

- Beyond the 'four walls' belies nature – the outdoor classroom, the ultimate environment for a child to learn about themselves and the world around them. As we know children learn using their whole body, nature-based play allows children to engage all of their senses through active exploration of the environment. (Maree Day, Southern REAP)
- We believe an early passion for nature and exposure to the outdoor world instils a certain skillset not available in any classroom. In the structured, busy and technologically-advanced world we live in, the role of outdoor play that we experienced as children is being forgotten. Nature-based play is proven to be significantly beneficial to all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional. (Stacey Thompson, Therm Limited)
- Children connect with nature through regularly spending time in a natural environment in all weather, exploration both independent and guided, considered risk taking, the learning of local pūrākau and the concept of kaitiakitanga... the children of Tiaki have spent many hours, playing, learning and exploring in this beautiful natural environment. With the blessing of the local hapū, Ngāti Te Roro o te Rangi, they have developed a wetland on the edge of the lake and are responsible for this ongoing project. (Gayle Croft Tiaki ELC)
- We have been operating nature-based play in woodland areas in Christchurch for the past 18 months. Families are seeking this type of experience for their child. I have been operating 2 certified playgroups which have been very popular with local families attending regularly. Every time I put on an additional session or event for the 0-6 age group they sell out in a matter of days. Unfortunately, I have to put the cost back on quite high parental fees which would exclude some families from partaking. We have been asked to run 'Forest Kindy' aka 'drop off sessions' where caregivers are not required to stay but with the current legislation and funding this is not possible. (Kim Tenebaum, Timbernook Christchurch)
- Many centres, although meeting the standards for adequate inside spaces, have outside areas that do not meet the needs for children's outside play in natural settings... The call for nature-based programmes is growing in NZ like it is around the world. The growing voice of families in NZ who want something different should be listened to and respected. The evidence around nature-based programmes should be considered and a way forward with a new 'nature-based' licence should be added to the regulations. (Emma Woods, Woodland Escape)
- With environmental degradation, habitat loss, climate change top of the list of national (and international) issues to be dealt with urgently, nature-based programmes offer those of us passionate about our future lead the paradigm shift required. Nature based programmes offer us the chance to educate our children 'in' the connectivity of the earth community in a way building based programmes cannot, and do not. I entreat you to consider this submission for all the children who call this land 'home'. (Pennie Brownlee, Education for the Head and the Heart)
- Benefits we have noticed; relationships strengthened both tamariki, kaiako and whanau, connected, belonging and ownership of their natural world, sense of environmental responsibility, risk taking, independence, children getting to know

themselves and what they are capable of, this supporting positive dispositions about themselves as capable competent learners. Our natural environment nurtures curiosity, creativity, adaptability, teamwork, decision-making and empathy, and gives our mokopuna space and time to negotiate, compromise and self-regulate. (Stephanie Broomhall, Prebbleton Playcentre)

- Educators are prepared to give what it takes to provide a light in the tunnel for many who are struggling with where to take education into the 21 st century... Our organisation came into being as our previous work was with youth development through the outdoors. As we saw what is now emerging such as youth suicide rates we became aware of the need to address education from birth up and the relationship to nature in the development of a childs foundation years. By enabling a nature-based licence in ECE would be progressive and would ensure that every child of all social economic backgrounds and cultural groups can be enriched by such programme. (Anna Gentry, Nature Play New Zealand)

## 15. Testimonials from educators who currently or have run nature excursion programmes in NZ

These teacher testimonials were captured via an online form and copied 'as is' to this submission.

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### **Michelle Collins, Sturges Road Kindergarten, Auckland**

I was previously in a centre that operated a forest kindy experience on a daily basis. From the first excursions into the forest, I noticed how children struggled, the varying terrains, not quite knowing what to do without having toys & climbing equipment. As this became a daily occurrence, the children's experiences changed. Exploring the forest, gaining confidence in climbing challenging terrains, children knowing their own physical capabilities (risky play, safety), utilising the affordances that nature provided. The children became scientists, protectors of the forest, learnt to care for nature - the insects and creatures they found. The children had first hand experiences in witnessing growth - insects/creatures and plants/bush. And the leadership - children became leaders (some you didn't see this happen in the centre). I am now in a kindy that originally didn't offer a bush kindy experience, until February this year. It has been an amazing experience to witness this all again. The change in the children's confidence, the children's play. The fact that our Tamariki gather the rubbish that is in "their" play space & look after their new environment, is truly humbling and empowering to us all. There have been many, many success stories, being able to climb a tree for the first time in their lives (4yr olds), witnessing children show & talk their peers through a challenging situation, building a hutt - all through team work and collaboration, falling over in mud and accepting its okay (for some cultures), assessing their own risk - knowing there is help if needed, but hardly ever. Seeing leadership develop with new peers attending bush kindy, leading them through the bush. For me personally, knowing I can trust these children to make the right decisions for themselves, knowing they all look out for another (even though they don't really play with one another at kindy), knowing the rules (boundaries) and abiding by them to keep themselves and their peers safe. These are just a few successes so far in our bush kindy adventures, with many more to come I'm sure.

Would love to see many, many more! Witnessing the changes is amazing & so beneficial for the children. These days children miss out on nature experiences, with sometimes both parents working, housing and land limitations, children in childcare for longer hours and more days through the week, with sterile climbing equipment and very minimal risky play experiences - something which could be detrimental into adolescence.

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### **Kylie Burrell, Arrowtown Preschool - Arrowtown. Victoria Kids Early Childhood Services – Wellington**

Arrowtown Preschool Explorers is the best day of the teaching week. There is always something different to notice, there are always surprise opportunities to engage with and children lead the way and set the pace. Nature based programmes give children an authentic opportunity to be children. Unhurried time in nature promotes peaceful exploration, opportunities to be, to wonder, question and collaborate. It promotes creativity, inquiry, problem solving and offers opportunities to take measured risks in an engaged and connected way. All children become equals when you take away the fences, and they become hyper aware of their surroundings and how to keep themselves safe. Every child is challenged in their own way by nature and they're engaging more of their brains that in man made, uniform and predictable play spaces. Children grow their

confidence, become more resilient and are able to achieve things neither they nor their families knew they were capable of. They are fully engaged with their environment. They notice changes within the natural environment and learn to love it, becoming kaitiakitanga of the spaces they visit. You can tell from observing children who spend extended periods of time in nature, that at the end of their epic day, they are fulfilled as learners and explorers and they've achieved something they're proud of.

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### **Melissa Hambly, Melissa's Playhouse, Brunei, south East Asia**

When I lived in Brunei for 6 years, five Kiwi mums asked me to run a weekly session for their 2 year olds, as an alternative to international school preschool. I grew this into a licenced preschool and served over 250 families over 5 years. We had Adventure Fridays where we went into nature for several hours - into the jungle to play in a stream and observe plants and trees, to the beach to explore a cave and swim - and I was blown away by the difference in children's behaviour as a result. Their physical confidence grew, their social interactions and language became much more sophisticated, they relaxed and seemed so happy, and their problem-solving skills increased too. Amazing. I decided that one day I would run a nature kindy back in NZ.

As part of my Bachelor of Education, major in Inclusive Education (Special Ed), and my current graduate diploma in ECE, I have learned about the ideal education of young children, and had access to the latest research on the benefits of being in large spaces in nature. Rates of anxiety and depression in younger and younger children, and deterioration of physical flexibility, strength and confidence would all be improved by lots of time in nature. Cognitive function and language would increase in sophistication too. My experiences in 2 centres recently have left me feeling disturbed, and motivated to advocate for children's right to healthy physical and emotional development in much bigger, more natural spaces. It is very clear to me that we are failing our children by enclosing them in spaces which are too small and disconnected from nature.

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### **Hella Coenen, Wairarapa Forest School**

Kia ora Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story and express how close to my heart this topic is. I as a Steiner kindergarten teacher for most of my working life, we moved to a rural property, 18 km north of Masterton, 9 years ago. I work as a reliever for Whanau Manaaki kindergarten association. We retired 230 acres of heavily grazed land that joins the Tararua Forest Park. In September 2016 I opened the Wairarapa Forest School on Facebook, as a celebration of the regeneration that is happening here. Naturally kindy groups and some school groups took a keen interest to come and visit our Kahikatea classroom. These outings have been a huge success, clearly showing the need for our children to be immersed in the natural world in particular the wild uncultivated places. All the evidence is there that green spaces improve the health and well being, for children as well as adults. Once a month in Winter and once a week during the rest of the year on a Monday, parents and children come out to play at Forest School, we usually cook on the fire, explore, build huts, whittle sticks for damper, look for koura but most importantly the children play. My dream is to have groups of children that fall behind in the schooling system come out one day a week with exemption from their headmasters. As well as this I would love to continue to host groups of Early Childhood. The Forest School Ethos is about regular time in the bush in all weather, experiencing all seasons.

A full-time bush kindergarten would be the ultimate dream. We are looking at building an Kekuli (Native Canadian underground house) to protect against the North Westerly winds that can be fears. We do have rainproof cover. In the UK there are over 200 Forest

School education providers now, many schools pay staff to train so they can implement this vitally important but missing component in their curriculum. When I think how very little support we get here in NZ and how much I/we are continuing to invest voluntary to meet the needs of our future generation, as well as the need for the land to regenerate. We do all this without any financial support. The importance for children to build healthy relationships with the natural world, connect with the land with the bush is immensely important for the development of the whole child! May we see changes happening in the near future.

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#### **Alice Jowsey, Nature Kids Motueka / Harakeke Motueka**

I grew up in remote natural settings as a child. I remember clearly how quality time in nature was wonderful. Working at Harakeke and Nature Kids is great experience one where I see strengths in children's independence, individuality and competency grows. Drawing from Te Whariki, Maori kaupapa, Clare Warden and European forest schools their philosophies are ones I really feel give back to children. When unpacked all of the aspects of forest school approach give children a real and meaningful beginning to life. I would love to work in one as a qualified teacher. Look forward to when I'm able. Make the change MOE!

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#### **Victoria Ford, Old MacDonalds rural education centre, Hamilton**

I set up our Tamariki o te Ngahere programme in October last year. My inspiration was from the natural phenomena conference I attended the year before and also my own professional development inquiry where I wanted to see the effects nature has on children's behaviour and development. The same ten children attend in 10 week chunks. It's the oldest 10 children with the same teacher/s each time to build a sense of community and trust to enable children to feel safe. The outcomes have been amazing. I saw children's confidence soar, they were taking risks in a safe environment and were so proud of themselves. It is child led and play based. The learning has taken so many different paths. Behaviour that might have been challenging when confined in a centre environment has not been seen while out in the forest. The children are allowed to explore and play as nature truly intended. Getting children ready for life is what we're focused on.... So we believe our ngahere programme is helping build up the learner so they can feel confident and show persistence when things in life get tricky. The Community is fully behind it, with amazing feedback from parents and children. Ngahere day is the favourite day of those who attend. We are lucky at our centre that we have 2 acres and farm land to explore when not at the ngahere programme. All of our tamariki get to explore nature daily. Our centre owner is passionate about this. I cannot support Celia enough on her quest to break down barriers for our tamariki. Thanks

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#### **Lesley Ottey, Eco Educate Canterbury**

My company works with 125 schools and preschools. Providing sustainability education funded by councils. Children who have had exploring of the outdoors environment stand out as well balanced enquiring learners. They understand risks and care of environment and others. They are a joy to work with as they are more confident. The recent example of a whole class of 7 years asked to fold up a newspaper. Most didn't even try. They waited for someone else to do for them. A small group went onto fold paper help others then problem solved the best way to put 2 ice cream containers together and get the lid on. This small group spent regular time outside engaged with the environment. Give me a whole class of these learners please in fact whole schools. The best schools and preschools for me are where children have access to trees to climb, grass and contact

with natural areas I've also worked with highly challenging teens and connecting them to nature certainly helped. Many never had in the past

Our environment and our children are our future. Why would we not choose bush kindys. Am not convinced some of the current plastic not fantastic ecc are so great. As a parent of 2 very different learners we exposed them to outdoor learning. School classrooms didn't really work well for either. we now have 2 super adults who are a real asset to the community. Volunteering and caring So please just do this seems an absolute no brainer

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### **Genna Hayward, Porse in home childcare (Invercargill)**

We run a nature playgroup once a month (would love to do more!) in any weather which is a true testimony down here in Southland. What we love about the programme is that children and their educators are enjoying being in nature together. The children are growing in confidence by climbing trees, friendships are developing with one another, we are all learning about Papatuanuku and her gifts. Being out in the fresh air we have babies that sleep through everything, children are more focused, adults bring their inner child out and we have so much fun. We don't set anything up provocation wise, we do bring some tools however but there is no shelter. We took shelter under magnolia trees once when it poured down and the children still talk about that particular day.

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### **Kristie Harris, Apples Onehunga**

We run a nature programme in our centre. We explore Cornwall Park which is a walk away. The children are so motivated to get up there it takes 20 mins to walk there and they all achieve this. When we first started this up when we took over ownership however some children really struggled. (over weight and children with Indian/Arabic ethnic backgrounds. However once they got there you could see the changes instantly. We noticed all of our children's well-being changed. There was less behavior, more outside play more imaginative play etc. We have just purchased a centre van that seats 10 so that we can explore more areas of Cornwall Park. Our programme attracted a lot of our families to us. So at the end of 2017 we took down our old playground and have created a completely natural outdoor setting. Our infant and toddlers area is the same. We do a lot of gardening and playing in the dirt. Before I was manager of this centre, I was relieving at Apples. At the same time I was trying to start up my own nature kindy at home. The owner was inspired by my idea of nature programmes and offered me to implement it in the centre however I would like. In the last 2 years I have transitioned all 3 centres to a natural, recycled nature play programme. We are continuing to grow and inspire many families into nature play. It is amazing how there is such a lack of education and knowledge into just how important nature play and being outside is out there. We have a very low sickness rate in both our centres. Also low accident records. We believe this has a lot to do with our nature programme in and out of the centre and the risk taking involved in day to day play.

Mental health of children in NZ is due to the "technology generation" This is ruining our children's ability to develop their right side of their brain. Parents are so busy working the kids go to some kindys and schools and are stuck in a classroom/centre all day 5 days. When they get home it's late and parents are so busy and tired they don't get outside...The same for the weekends. The children instead are on devices or watching TV. My daughter is at primary school. This also needs to be implemented here. There is so much bullying and behavioural problems due to the same problems. Teachers can not deal with the over load and increase of children's mental health and as a result children who were high

achievers are becoming low achievers mainly because of the social impact/mental health they are experiencing. I believe if we start young then this may help battle a lot of the developmental stages later on and give children better strategies to be able to cope with depressions and mental exertion. I could go on.

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### **Briar Broad, Te Akoranga Playcentre Association**

I coordinated a weekly 3 hour outdoor session for playcentre families from Te Akoranga association. Over that time we watched children growing confidence in moving their bodies through varied environments, growing confidence in their ability to take risks and to make judgements about their own and other's safety, but also feeling safe knowing that adults were there for help and support. They increased their awareness of the world around them and developed a true curiosity for discovering more about the natural world and how it works. They were given space and time to explore what interested them and those interests would be further supported and investigated back at their home playcentres. The children developed excellent communication skills talking to each other and to adults constantly about what they were doing, seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, what scared them, what made them happy. They played played played in all its natural sense, they found natural obstacle courses wherever they went, they found sticks to draw pictures with in the dirt or sand, they weaved boats to float on the water, they collected insects and shells to identify. They learnt that rain is nothing to hide from, it's something to enjoy.

The benefits are endless and you don't have to look far to see them all. In particular, Children who are given the opportunity to explore in a natural setting develop their senses so much more than those in an artificial environment, and they develop a much greater awareness of their own bodies abilities and of managing their own safety. I hope we see many many more outdoor/Bush programmes being established, whether they are weekly or full time. Our tamariki need this.

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### **Jodie Piggott, Nature's Nest, Warkworth**

Through our outdoor explorers programme we have seen a huge change in the way children learn to enjoy and respect nature, learn to discover and challenge their play, support others in challenging situations, partake in risk taking experiences and develop a significant amount of confidence in themselves thru thru trusting themselves and others.

Outdoor nature play allows for bigger spaces to run free, to become in tune with our environment and use what Mother Nature left for us as our learning tools to help support us and guide us with learning and developing in the world!!

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## 16. Testimonials from parents whose children are on nature excursion programmes in NZ

These parent testimonials were captured via an online form and copied 'as is' to this submission.

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### **Priya Bhikha, Play n learn Nature kindergarten Cornwall park**

Out of the many centres I visited, this felt like exactly what kids should be doing. Like it was their natural environment, & they thrived. From not knowing what to do in nature by herself, after one session, she came home & played solo in the backyard for 2 hours, with no toys. The exploration & social & group skills they developed were 2nd to none. Their care for each other grew naturally & the group was far more caring for each other, than in her Montessori preschool. She is physically confident in her body. Knows how to calculate risk & make decisions about what is & isn't safe all by herself. They learned not to be afraid of weather or nature. But also how to be safe in it. It was child led & self-directed. The only time if the week without rushing, pressure or having to get things right. But they learned loads. Especially interpersonal, social, problem solving, imagination, curiosity, exploration skills. I can't help but feel that the children of tomorrow would all be very different, in a much more positive way, if they all had this experience as young children.

I think it is the most natural and beneficial approach for New Zealand children available at this time. Would likely greatly reduce the mental health issues & stresses of young people in NZ today. And create an affinity for the countries natural resources. Research has shown that they're more likely to protect it if they have trust connection

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### **Pradtana Wongsinghadacho, Long bay Nature kindergarten, Auckland (Play and Learn)**

I have two children my son almost 8 years old he attended Long bay kindy once a week from 4-5.5 years old and my daughter 4.5years old attend from 3 - present. 1. They are healthy, they always Bare feet most of the day. 2. Love outdoor, fresh air and no worries about the weather or dirt 3. Love Nature, tree and environment know how to look after it. They prompt clean up and pick up rubbish when they spots them. 4. They know the rule how to use the park especially reserved park like Long Bay 5. they respect to others, equipment and themselves (they express and explain how they feel. 6. They know the boundaries, self care and self play. 7. They are more creative and adapt easy in the situation. 8. They observe, think and try hard when they want to do something new. 9. They are so lucky to be out all day without worries about poison animals. I hope the bush kindy can grow to be BUSH School. So the kids still continue learn through play and let's the kids be in nature more in the primary school as well. At the moment Once they go to school they will have to stay in the room, do the same things and too many healthy and safety rule.

Our children aren't CHEAP oop!! sorry SHEEP. They aren't the same. Here we have lot of green space to explore. Let's give them their own space in nature. Let them feel it, know and learn how to use, share space and look after the nature. Let's them to be Real Tidy Kiwi themselves not just on the advertise or on beautiful poster or on events. Let's them play and play and get fresh air in different environment. Let's them create their own things, spend their own time without interrupt by adults to herd them to do the same

thing. Spend less money to maintenance the building, playspace, paperwork about Health & Safety.

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**Ranjan Jeythas, Nature School NZ, Plimmerton**

It's hard to explain the benefits but so obvious once you are in. The caring for nature and the knowledge they gain from being out in the bushes are unparalleled to any classroom learning you can get. I saw immediate and long-term effects in my children when it comes to nature and how they appreciated before and after. They also tend to quickly adopt to the learning and apply them in real life better than the classroom learning objectives.

My eldest son attended a day-care set in "country life" theme. And I could clearly observe how he developed some serious skills and sense of caring for nature at a very young age (he was only 26 months). Therefore, I strongly support any such initiatives to get kids at very young age to learn and be sync with nature. I wholeheartedly believe the experience will make them a better person in their future life where lifestyles are more modern and tech savvy.

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**Leona Smith, Plimmerton Kindergarten, Wellington**

My daughter previously attended the Bush Sprouts programme run by Plimmerton Kindergarten. What I noticed in my daughter and in others was most definitely an increase in resilience. Being in a small group, that was well supported by excellent teachers allowed them to take on challenges that they didn't think they could do. The support allowed them to try things, practise and take risks, while also assessing the risks and the benefits and to talk about it knowledgably. Leadership was another great quality I noticed. The children had lots of chances to practise being leaders, looking after one another and getting themselves heard. It gave them great confidence in themselves.

I think it is very important and should be supported wholeheartedly by the government. If I had more younger children, I would most definitely want them learning in a bush Kindergarten!

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**Hazel Walkden, Farm friends Swanson**

Risk taking, engaging with nature, exploring the elements, team building...the list goes on. At our core we are mammals on this planet just like all others, we were made for the planet. We've built society etc, but we are not necessarily made to be inside 4 walls! The organic, unhurried nature of a Bush kindy provides children with the opportunities to engage in authentic learning experiences to complete everyday tasks and achieve whatever goal it is they're trying to achieve. Out of such rich engagements comes language, the need for clear communication, problem solving, team work, discovering risks, limits etc. I can't praise this kind of environment enough. It's a happy place for a young human! When kids are happy, they engage and learn - they thrive! My child in particular has gained gross motor confidence, social skills and organisational skills.

They're just amazing!

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**Debbie MacDonald, Nature Play and Learn - Cornwall Park**

Greater confidence; keen explorer and problem solving. Logan was a sensitive, risk adverse child and being able to explore nature and take on different roles within the group (sometimes leading, sometimes supporting, some days just tagging along) has really grown his confidence and teamwork.

With the significant access kids have to technology, we are reducing the opportunity for what really makes a difference - freedom to explore and appreciate the world we live in. Logan learns to count through building things and counting his materials, he learns to read and write by recording his adventures.

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### **Cavina Skilton-Brignall, Harriette Vine Kindergarten, Whanganui**

My daughter attended Harriette Vine Kindergarten from 2 years 10 months until she left for school at 5. The older children are lucky enough to have 1 morning a week to attend the Nature Program. This program was part of the reason we chose this Kindy, (along with many others) Grace waited breathlessly until she was old enough to go. I was lucky enough to be able to go along a parent help one morning, it was lovely to watch the children as they explored the outdoors, from petting animals, simply running around in lots of empty space, the determination to not give up as we walked to the top of the hill, or when we found ourselves almost stuck in the mud! While it was things we might do at home around the farm, to explore and experience nature and the outdoors with her own peers was a different learning opportunity. She loved being able to share her knowledge with her peers and to learn from them. She still loves searching for Huhu grubs, saving Bugs, Beetles and Insects to keep and study.

Although for our family the opportunity to attend a Kindy with a nature programme was a bonus and simply built on what we already do at home, for many other children this time outdoors and the ability to explore nature is not a given. I believe it is vital important that we ensure ALL our Tamariki are given the opportunity to experience the joy, drama, majesty and humbling experience that is nature and the outdoors. If we do not give ALL children this opportunity then how will we raise the next generation to love, and care for our world. We are learning now what happens when generations of the population become too separated from our Natural World, from the disconnect around where food comes from (and how we can feed a growing population) to Climate Change and how we impact the world (both individually and as a Global Population). I would love the opportunity to send my younger children to a Bush Kindergarten and I would love even more to see it as a viable option for families that may not otherwise be able to give their children the experience themselves

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### **Jen Salle-Webb, Step Ahead – Whangarei**

My son attend a farm day every Friday when he spend the day at a farm instead of in the centre. This is a fantastic opportunity for him to explore the outdoor and experience nature in a way he would not be able to on site. They have made forts, hunts, and also sort of different things sparked spontaneously by their interests. They interact with sheep and cow, go fishing and have hands on encounters with the natural world. I couldn't think of anything better.

I would love my son to be involved in this type of learning everyday rather than just once a week. Full time bush kindergartens and forest schools are an asset.

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### **Drinda Jones, Old Mac Donald's rural care Centre, Hamilton**

where to start ! My daughter's confidence has grown so much since starting forest school 1 day a week! Her little group of 10 go on a day trip and for her to do this by herself with her friends is great. She's learnt to lead in her adventures and is confident to participate in team activities such as building swings, making forest huts, collecting bugs (which she used to squirm at) etc! Her love and respect of the outdoors has grown so much which is

so important in New Zealand as there is such an outdoor culture in this country :) I very much support this activity at our old Macs community

Kids learn so much from the outdoors and since this trend of sedentary living, it is ever more important to get our kids outdoors and active :)

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#### **Eileen Reid, Beachlands Maraetai Playcentre, Auckland**

All three of my children have attended our bush programme at our playcentre and it one of the reasons I chose our Centre for their ECE. The skills they developed from these sessions were numerous but the most important I believe were their independence/self help skills and resilience. They had to carry their own bags on their adventures and learn to deal with the weather impacting their comfort and respond to it appropriately. Their social skills were enhanced by working in a small group situation to solve problems they encountered. And last but not least I love that they have all developed a strong relationship with their local and wider environment. They care for it and have good knowledge of the environmental issues our planet is facing.

I strongly support the proposal for full time bush kindergartens in NZ. We need to ensure our tamariki are equipped and have the desire to be NZ's caretakers of the future.

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#### **Natalie Greig, Play and learn, Long Bay**

There are not enough words to describe the benefits of this kind of learning, I'm a huge advocate for it. It's only in recent times that children have been deprived of it and we see a rise in obesity, diabetes, ADHD and other sensory disorders I can't help but wonder if there are links here. Our own daughter has shown increased confidence, greater use of imagination, awareness of risks and how to manage them, skills to support her peers, a huge love and respect for nature and how to protect it. There are vast opportunities for children to explore science, maths and language along with social and emotional skills in a way that unfolds naturally and creates no pressure or stigma attached to that learning. Our daughter spent an afternoon learning about erosion through exploration at a sandy creek. Draws letters in the sand. Counts ducks and pukekos. Sees pictures in the sky. Endless ways to learn. At the same time she is physically free to run and jump and climb ensuring she is fit and able and healthy. In her words "it's fun, we get to do whatever we want and we get to have a meeting" It's child lead creating empowerment and a sense of self esteem. I couldn't advocate for it more.

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#### **Jayde Kenny, Old MacDonald's, Hamilton**

I loved that the children got to go on an adventure. My daughter looked forward to it every week. They got to see nature, feed an eel, climb trees, run, pick flowers. My daughter really benefited from this and it increased her confidence. The difference in her was quite visible - lots of parents and family members commented on how much more confidence she had become. I think that the "forest school" was the reason for this.

I think we need to get our kids outside. As children we used to spend a lot of time outside, on our own. I think our kids are really missing out on this type of experience. While I don't think that the world we live in now allows us to leave our kids on their own, at least with this type of learning they get to experience a bit more of what we experienced as kids.

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#### **Polly Allen, Wanganui nature playgroup**

My 11 month old son and I have just recently joined a local nature playgroup in Wanganui. In the short time we have been going I feel lucky to have found a group that offers my son the opportunity to connect with nature, using his body and senses to explore the natural world around him and makes sense of it alongside peers. I watch the older children work together to create their own imaginative play and can't wait to see my own sons imagination, creativity, social connections and respect and love for the natural environment grow and flourish.

I believe the benefits in children connecting and learning through the natural environment are invaluable, to not only enhance children's holistic development and learning but also to support a deeper connection, understanding and care for the natural world.

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### **Crystal MacKenzie, Seedlings nature kindergarten, New Plymouth**

I drive past about 4 kindys/day cares, 6kms to seedlings. It's one of the best decisions I've ever made. My son has grown so much since being there, he's gained more confidence, independence, he's learnt his own limits and abilities by being given space and encouragement to be himself. His health has been alot better than being in a traditional daycare/kohanga he plays outside rain or shine, at home he has very little TV time and not devices and he's always got something to do, is never bored because he knows how to occupy himself in any environment The explorers (educators) are fantastic, they don't push curriculum, they talk constantly about their surroundings and answer questions the children have, they read books, share stories and from that my sons speech and vocabulary is amazing, they take a gentle approach to everything, they encourage the children to talk about their feelings when it comes to disagreements with other children.

Children need this, if you restrict them, tell them how high they can climb, or that it's raining so they have to stay inside, if you confine them they won't grow it explore and appreciate their surroundings. Children should grow up how we did, bare foot feeling the earth beneath their feet, in a natural jungle gym "There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing"

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## 17. What are the next steps / possible options

There is a lot to consider with a submission like this, so I urge you to take time reviewing and discussing the proposal.

I would like to present in person to the select committee regarding this submission along with a couple of other leaders in the field. I can imagine there are many questions that will arise, and a paper document can't always answer the burning questions.

I can also put you in touch with anyone who has been mentioned in this submission for further information if required.

I recommend a visit to a centre that is currently running a one/two day a week nature excursion programme to see with your own eyes how this could work. I can recommend some centres to visit throughout New Zealand and I would be happy to attend with you.

Section 17 of this document outlines a pilot programme in Washington State that has been set up to do exactly what I am proposing. They would be more than happy to talk through the process they have undertaken. I see this as a possible starting point for New Zealand too. This would ensure that processes and systems are put in place and that a New Zealand standard is set that works for the New Zealand setting.

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## 19. APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Case Studies

#### Fiddleheads Forest School

- **Where:** University of Washington Botanic Gardens, Washington Park Arboretum.
- **Timing:** 9am-1pm
- **Class options:** M/W/F or Tu/Th or M-F
- **Class size:** maximum 14
- **Student to Teacher ratio:** 1:7 (14 kids, 2 lead teachers + 1 or 2 UW student interns)
- **Classrooms:** Trillium and Magnolia (both classrooms have 2, 3 and 5-day options)
- **Ages:** ages 3-5

Fiddleheads Forest School is an entirely outdoor, nature-based program where the premise for our day-to-day activities is play and exploration. As children engage with the world around them and inquire about it we will supplement with curriculum to further engage their curiosity.

#### Requirements

- Fiddleheads is uniquely designed to meet the needs of children ages 3-5. In order to enrol, we ask that a child be at least 3 and no older than 5 by September 1st, 2018.
- Because of our unique environment, we require that children are potty-trained (no pull-up diapers) by the start of preschool. *We also recognize that children of differing abilities may toilet at different times in their development. We are committed to working with families of children with special needs who are not yet toilet-trained in order to be as inclusive as possible.*
- Fiddleheads is an entirely outdoor program. You and your child must be prepared to (and want to!) be outside rain or shine.
- Your family must be interested in a 10-month preschool program (with options for summer enrolment)

**Our Mission:** At the Fiddleheads Forest School we believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn, and that they do so by exploring the world around them. We aim to foster a sense of wonder, to guide rather than compel, and to provide room for possibility rather than attempt to constrain children's interests to fit within a certain curriculum. Our goal is to create an ideal setting for students ages 3-5 to grow into citizens of the world, with a respect for all cultures and environments and the desire to engage with their communities.

With the help of our teachers, our families, and our students we are working to create a program that arises out of the unique social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of each student within this environment. Teachers at the Forest School act as guides; helping children to cultivate senses that are attuned to the affordances of their surroundings during a developmentally crucial time. Daily observation and experimentation on an individual and group level foster a love of science as well as social and emotional development and self-regulation. By providing structure in the environment, teachers foster the development of responsibility, independence, and executive functioning skills to create a strong foundation for future growth.



**Nature Classroom:** Fiddleheads has two classroom sites located among the native trees and shrubs at the Washington Park Arboretum. At Fiddleheads, students spend the morning exploring and engaging in a multitude of ways. For example, on a given morning you might encounter:

- Children gathered at the peace table to discuss what “zone” they are in, examine emotions cards, or use the peace rose to resolve a conflict independently.
- A mixed age group heading down to the dome shelter deeply engaged in imaginative play; the dome has transformed into a den, and they are a family of wolves, bringing food home to their pups.
- A young girl hunched over the microscope under a big leaf maple tree examining a jelly fungus she’s discovered.
- Children and teachers following the sound of alarming crows to discover a young Cooper’s hawk or owl in the branches of a Douglas Fir Tree. Later, the students will process the morning’s lessons by incorporating the experience into their own play or recording it in a waterproof nature journal.
- A circle time spent discussing the morning’s activities and integrating them into whatever we are studying at the time—whether that means connecting them to a social thinking concept like whole body listening or to a natural science unit on raptors. On chilly days the children prepare cedar tea to sip as they sing songs about lichen, count the days of the month or the days of the year, and reflect on the experiences they’ve had as a group.
- An adventure out into the arboretum. There is an incredible wealth of wildlife here, and at Fiddleheads we take advantage of all it has to offer. The children know that the forest grove may be their classroom, but the Arboretum is their school, and on a given morning, *anything* is possible.

<https://botanicgardens.uw.edu/education/youth-family/fiddleheads-forest-school/prospective-families/>

**Kit Harrington, Director**

[kith@uw.edu](mailto:kith@uw.edu); (206) 616-5261

**Caitlin Van Der Spuy, Lead Teacher**

[ffschool@uw.edu](mailto:ffschool@uw.edu); (206) 221-6427

**Jenn Leibham, Lead Teacher**

[ffschool@uw.edu](mailto:ffschool@uw.edu); (206) 221-6427

## The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

- **Where:** Letham village in Fife, Scotland
- **Timing:** Monday – Thursday 0830 – 1700 and Fridays 0900 – 1300.
- **Class options:** Most children attend between 4 hours and 3 days per week
- **Class size:** up to 40 Children
- **Student to Teacher ratio:** Ratio not specified. 7 practitioners mentioned on website
- **Age:** We welcome children from age 3 with enrolments throughout the year.

We are open 49 weeks of the year. Based in a 25 acre woodland in Fife, we run a pioneering childcare service, entirely out of doors, 49 weeks of the year. Now in our 10th year

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery opened its invisible doors in September 2008, receiving at this time the Nancy Ovens Award for Play ‘Outstanding Contribution to Play’ and from Play Scotland ‘Best Practice in Action’. As Scotland’s first ever outdoor nursery, a unique and highly acclaimed philosophy and practice has evolved in the woods crafted around our guiding principles – Presence, Nature, Play.

Based in a 25-acre woodland north of Letham village in Fife, the nursery offers explorative full-time outdoor play, 4½ days a week, for 49 weeks of the year. With a present roll of about 40 children attending between 4 hours and 3 days per week the enthusiasm for outdoor play and learning appears to be rising.

Yurt and tarps offer shelter from weather; fires and much physical movement also keep the cheer and warmth. Our practitioners develop a strong stable presence in the natural environment to ensure that children are safe, secure and are offered excellent child care and educational development. Through complete immersion in the natural world with ‘nature as teacher’ we encourage resilience and confidence in the children whilst practitioners provide a calm, safe space for exploration and learning. This approach allows children to extend their curiosity, enabling them to learn about the world and about themselves through play in the woods. We are Fife Council Partner Providers and are registered with the Care Inspectorate.

As a not for profit organization we invest back into our community of families, staff, volunteers and directors – reinvesting in the unfolding and development of the intrinsic worth of each child. In turn we outwardly share our expertise about nature-based pedagogy and our unique philosophy through our pioneering workshops. Over 10 years we have become an internationally recognised centre for excellence, attracting interest worldwide.

In 2017 we won the Nancy Ovens Award for Play for a second time and our founder’s achievements in services to Early Years Play and Education were formally recognised through the honour of a British Empire Medal.

### 1.1.1 Fees

Our fees from August 2018 will be £44 per full day and £24 per Friday session. When you enrol your child, you will be asked to set up a monthly Standing Order to pay fees. Preschool funding is available and we also accept Childcare Vouchers. Our friendly office team will be happy to answer any administrative questions you may have regarding funding and payment, you can reach them on the details below.

If you are interested in sending your child to Secret Garden they will require some specialist clothing to keep warm and happy all year round. Do not let this put you off though, we have various agreements with some great local children's clothing providers and some really good kit of our own which we can lend children for a term.

Children will need different layers depending on the time of year but typically these will always include:

- waterproof trousers and jacket or suit (thickness depending on season)
- waterproof, thermal boots in winter and lighter ones in summer
- fleece layers (trousers and top)
- thermals (winter)
- wool socks
- spare clothes in a dry bag (just in case!)

“What do you do when it rains?” Play!! Remaining warm and dry is the most important element in enabling happiness and creative play in all weathers. Whilst the woods themselves afford shelter (and our practitioners know where to go to obtain maximum shelter from the prevailing wind), we also have large, lightweight tarps that we rig up to provide extra protection - and a dry place to eat lunch. We are fortunate to have a yurt with a wood-burning stove that is really toasty in even the coldest conditions, and we can access this whenever required.

“What about toileting?” We have a specific area at each play camp where we erect a tarp to offer shelter and privacy for toileting. We compost our faeces waste, offering the children the opportunity to witness the transformational process of poo into apples! Children not used to toileting outside quickly adapt, and staff are on hand to assist as needed.

Weather: “No matter what you think about the weather on a given day, try to be positive, as this will rub off on the children. Turn rainy days into lots of puddles to play in, a drink for the plants, and good news for the farmers who are growing crops....” “Adults often need a little reminder that children see things differently, and that we are not being cruel by exposing them to all weathers. We are creating opportunities and memories which will stay with them.” “There is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.”

<https://secretgardenoutdoor-nursery.co.uk/homepage/>

Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery Office

Room 7 Volunteer House

69-73 Crossgate

Cupar

Fife

KY155AS

01334 652276

enquiries@secretgardenoutdoor-nursery.co.uk

## Waldkindergarten Immünster e.V.

- **Where:** Immünster, Germany
- **Timing:** Monday – Friday 8am-1pm
- **Class options:** Children can attend up to 5 days a week (most do)

The idea of the forest kindergarten comes from Denmark. There, the first forest kindergarten was founded about 45 years ago. There are now about 700 such facilities in Germany, of which more than 100 are in Bavaria and are growing. In our forest kindergarten, the children spend the whole year in the open air in all weathers. The forest provides excellent protection against the cold or heat. In extreme weather conditions the kindergarten takes place in a room of the Immünsterer elementary school.

We enable the children to take risks when they want to climb a tree or slide down a steep slope. We tell the children that they have to look after themselves – that is their job. The child discovers themselves and the group in an almost forgotten social dimension. We do not produce standardized children, but support every single child in their uniqueness and experience in this way a special kind of cooperation in a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere

A construction trailer is our base. Here are crafting materials, game accessories and spare clothes or rain cover if required. In the meadow in front of the car, vegetable and flower beds were created.

The focus of our pedagogical work is the age and development of teaching and promoting skills, abilities and qualities that strengthen the child's self-confidence and self-reliance, curiosity and enjoyment of learning. Children are born as individuals who develop their talents, inclinations, interests and handicaps, who want to go their own way and discover their abilities and qualities. They develop their physical, mental and emotional abilities according to their very own "inner blueprint" and they know when the time has come for the next step.

We build on the strengths and thereby help the child to gain confidence in himself and his own actions. Through accurate and holistic observation, we are able to recognize the requirements for a positive development.

The children learn appreciation for the plants and animals around us. We offer elementary experiences of earth, fire, water and air. The children learn that different seasons, weather and places have different playing opportunities for them. For the spirituality and magical worldview of a kindergarten child, nature is the most appropriate environment - the child is nature.

Children always learn with the whole body. By intensively perceiving with all senses, they can "touch" their life world first-hand. They are active creators of their game worlds and are looking for new individual challenges daily.

- See: the drawing of the clouds, the bee on the flower, the glittering snow on the top of the spruce, looking at the anthill in peace and discover ...
- Hear: The birdsong, the insects fly, the pattering rain, the wind in the trees ...
- Smell: The mossy forest floor, the flowers in the meadow, the resinous branch ...
- Taste: Dew drops, hoarfrost, a wet leaf, fresh summer clover ...
- Feel: The rough spruce cones, the fine petals, the furrowed tree bark, the smooth stone, the damp clay ...
- Balance: The uneven field, forest and meadow ground, the shaky tree trunk, the tree swing, climbing trees ...

### **Autonomy and democracy**

We motivate the children to recognize, express and deal with their interests, desires and feelings, so that they can actively influence and shape their everyday lives.

When voting in the morning circle on the choice of the place, the game offers, the course of a day, democratic action is learned.

### **Social Learning - TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG**

Our forest kindergarten encourages the children to contact each other and communicate with each other. The children learn to cooperate with each other. They pay attention to the timid or the weaker. Conflicts can be solved together and constructively in the group. Being together in nature requires mindfulness and reliability from each individual.

In the mixed-age group, everyone can learn from each other.

### **Creativity and imagination - A FLOOR CAN BE EVERYTHING**

The natural materials stimulate the imagination in a special way and provide the backdrop for stories and role-plays. They can be used at will, always available, and creative work often precedes the actual work.

### **Motor skills - TIME AND SPACE FOR SUFFICIENT BODY EXPERIENCE**

Nature offers the right place for every stage of motor development, for every need and personal challenge. All of these body experiences are the basis for later learning.

On the basis of trust in their individual abilities, we let the children independently develop their motor skills - of course from the point of view of the best interests of the child.

### **Health - I'M GOOD**

The diverse body experiences strengthen the immune system, endurance, strength, flexibility, coordination and balance. The low volume and freedom of movement, the children come out of the forest.

Healthy nutrition is a consistently important topic in our forest kindergarten.

Listening to birds, smelling moss, sucking snowflakes, feeling raindrops, explore caves, climb summit, Experience adventure, discover treasures, encounter wild animals. Get to know plants and animals, natural Understanding relationships, without a textbook. Experience nature a few hours a day, the year in its own Feel the change, play in the fresh air - the most natural thing in the world.

Waldkindergarten IImmünster e.V.

Dummeltshausener Str. 7, 85304 IImmünster

[info@waldkindergarten-ilmmuenster.de](mailto:info@waldkindergarten-ilmmuenster.de)

Mobil (0175) 8833716

## Appendix 2: Full Letters of Support

Please see the following pages.

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

31 August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I Nathan Wallis of X-Factor Education support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

The socio-emotional basis of the early childhood curriculum means it has different needs and applications in practice than cognitive based curriculums for older children. Nature schools and the New Zealand environment are perfectly suited to this. I do not believe the current legislation was meant to exclude this, so this amendment would bring it into line with current practice and research.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Nathan Wallis  
X-Factor Education



nathanwallis  
conscious intelligence

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

14 August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins,

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

The Children & Nature Network supports the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature-based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space. The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

Worldwide, the time that children spend indoors is rising, as is ADHD, depression and obesity. Due to changing landscapes and cultural practices, children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children. Children & Nature Network documents this research and other benefits of nature in our online Research Library. The benefits of nature play include:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- Supporting creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission in support of the proposed licence regulations changes for Early Childhood Services.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Executive Director  
Richard Louv, Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus

**About the Children & Nature Network** *The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) believes that time in nature makes children healthier, happier and smarter. C&NN is a US-based 501c3 non-profit organization working to connect children, families and communities to the natural world by investing in networks of diverse leaders, driving systems and policy change, and curating and broadcasting knowledge. Learn more at [childrenandnature.org](http://childrenandnature.org)*

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

13/8/2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of Nature Play New Zealand, we support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

We see that the proposed change would significantly affect and address fundamental early childhood developmental needs which at this time are not been addressed as effectively as they could be the New Zealand education framework.

The legislation for ECE currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space or resourcing needs. These structures are often what is limiting the development of world class initiatives and services for our young.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children would benefit from participation in a Nature based programme. This is not the place for the research however I am sure you are aware of not only the physical benefits to the wellbeing of the child but the emotional, mental and social benefits to them individually and collectively as a society.

As an organisation we have been upholding and supporting the nature education movement in New Zealand for at least 10 years. Assisting the establishment of the very successful - Natural Phenomena Nature Education conference has been small part of this work. This regular coming together of frontline educators who are developing and living the successes of nature based education in New Zealand is humbling. Humbling as these educators are prepared to give what it takes to provide a light in the tunnel for many who are struggling with where to take education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We have in New Zealand a dynamic curriculum and some incredible teachers prepared to pave the way into a new era of education and I ask that you may support them with policy changes that will assist all.

Our organisation came into being as our previous work was with youth development through the outdoors. As we saw what is now emerging such as youth suicide rates we became aware of the need to address education from birth up and the relationship to nature in the development of a child's foundation years. By enabling a nature based licence in ECE would be progressive and would ensure that every child of all social economic backgrounds and cultural groups can be enriched by such programme.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Anna Gentry - Director  
Nature Play New Zealand  
520 Waitotoi Road  
RD 3  
Whangarei  
Phone 027 7097 111

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

03 August 2018

**Letter of Support: RSNZ Catalyst Fund application by Associate Professor Scott Duncan**

On behalf of the School of Sport and Recreation, Auckland University of Technology, I would like to add support to the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

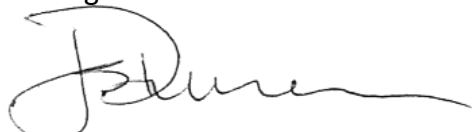
There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children do not have access to the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did. There are multiple benefits that nature-based play provides:

- Stress reduction;
- Improvement in social relations;
- Enhancement of cognitive abilities;
- Creativity and problem solving;
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development;
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

The legislation currently states that 2.5 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes clearly do not require this level of indoor space. The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations, which will allow early childhood educators to better meet the changing needs of our children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further support to this submission.

Kind regards



Associate Professor Scott Duncan  
Head of Department, Physical Activity, Nutrition, and the Outdoors  
School of Sport and Recreation, Auckland University of Technology  
Private Bag 92006, Auckland, New Zealand  
Ph: (+649) 921 9999 ext 7678; E-mail: scott.duncan@aut.ac.nz

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

14-8-2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I fully support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that amount of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

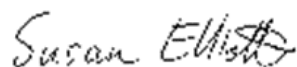
There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not experiencing the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhancing cognitive abilities
- Supporting creativity and problem solving
- Increasing physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improving academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sue Elliott  
Senior Lecturer and Course Co-ordinator, Early Childhood Education  
School of Education  
University of New England  
Armidale, NSW, 2351  
AUSTRALIA

Email: [sue.elliott@une.edu.au](mailto:sue.elliott@une.edu.au)

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Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

27/7/2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I on behalf of Gisborne Kindergarten Association support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space and in fact many in Europe just use a tent or small caravan as a base.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

We have always been keen to establish some Wild kindergartens in the environment of the east coast where children would be outside every day in all weathers and working alongside trained teachers.

I have played within the forest kindergartens of Norway, Denmark and Germany and have been teaching for over 36 years. I fully support this initiative.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

David Spraggs  
Senior Teacher



Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

31 July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I / On behalf of IPA Aotearoa NZ , we support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.strongly endorse the initiation of a discussion around honouring UNCROC and Article 31

In February 2011 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, announced its decision to draft and adopt a General Comment on Article 31. The General Comment 17 passed in 2013 and has been issued to every government of the world, which has signed up to the Convention, which includes New Zealand. The General Comment provides further guidance to world governments on implementation of Article 31.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) and the follow up discussion paper prepared by IPA World on Children’s Right to Play and the Environment, 2016 asserted that certain conditions need to be assured if children are to realize their Article 31 rights fully. Factors include:

- *Freedom from stress, social exclusion, prejudice or discrimination.*
- *An environment secure from social harm and violence, and sufficiently free from pollution, traffic and other hazards that impede free and safe movement.*
- *Availability of rest and leisure time, as well as space that is free from adult control and management.*
- *Space to play outdoors in diverse and challenging physical environments, with access to supportive adults, when necessary.*
- *Opportunities to experience, interact with and play in natural environments and the animal world.*

(See full list of factors <http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/IPA-Play-Environment-Discussion-Paper.pdf>)

IPA Aotearoa NZ would also consider it appropriate, in line with international work in this field, that lead teachers and managers require additional specialized educational certification and have this recorded on their practicing certificate.

The Ministry of Education can take this 'opportunity for change' to explore ways in which current legislation [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) and [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008](#). could be developed to enable full time nature based early care and education services /programmes in New Zealand, in line with the international framework and legislation currently in use such as *The Act on Day Care Facilities (introduced in 2007)* to regulate all Early care and education centres including Forest Kindergartens in Denmark. <http://www.english.sm.dk/responsibilities-of-the-ministry/early-childhood-education-and-care/>

A review of criteria in the legislation such as:

*"that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space."*, to consider specifications in the regulations that include a nature -based-special character license, just as there are licensing criteria for Hospital Play-based Early childhood services.

Reworking of criteria to serve nature-based services would provide for enlightened provision where currently there are distinct gaps in services that meet the Rights of the Child - Article 31.

We support the principle of reviewing the Regulations and Criteria to enable the special category of Nature-based ECCE services –Please find attached the Statement of Intent of the International Play Association Aotearoa New Zealand branch, and also the UN General Comment 17 that informs our work as a non-government organization.

Thank you for this consideration.

IPA Aotearoa New Zealand

Jill Rice  
President  
Nola Harvey  
Secretary  
[nolaharveynz@gmail.com](mailto:nolaharveynz@gmail.com)

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

15<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

### **Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I Stacey Young, on behalf of Cherry's Early Learning Centre, support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

We at Cherry's run regular excursions that follow the forest school initiatives example, we are an enviroschool whom tries to provide as much natural experiences as we can, we also have adopted a section of local river and are in the process of initiating a community garden, all these things we do to try and increase the connection our children have to nature and their community and to provide them opportunities to engage with nature in a way that this change in regulations could allow for more of. New Zealand is privileged to have such wonderful natural settings but alas, our children are spending less and less time out within it, with the increasing amount of time children spend in early childhood centres, allowing for more nature based programmes to run with the proposed legislative change, could open up opportunities for centres to support children in having these experiences that they so desperately need. Our planet is at a crisis point and we need kaitiaki to care for her, children who engage more with nature are proven to develop a care for it that leads to them becoming adults who advocate for it.

A large part of our motivation at Cherry's to run our excursions was observing the ever increasing disconnect between people and the land/tangata whenua and a desire from families, children and teachers to increase awareness of environmental issues. We see the significant gap and desire in the early childhood industry in Christchurch at this time, for more nature based programmes and centres, this change in legislation could aid those who want to fill that gap and meet that need do so. We find that in our centre environment going on these excursions, is a highly restricted process by policies and time restraints within the programme, what Celia is proposing, will open up opportunities for centres to be more supported and enabled to provide more fully immersive nature play centres and programmes.

We see through running our own "forest school" excursions the amazing endless benefits that nature-based play can offer children including;

- ongoing education that scaffolds children to move forward through life with a sustainable, ethical lens to all they do.
- Supports families and communities to make sustainable choices.
- Develop children's ecoliteracy.
- Regreening and regenerating wildlife and plant life, children, staff and whanau actively engage with this when they are able to be out in nature and see the need for it.
- Reigniting community spirit.
- Elicits more biocentric view, that sees humans, animals, plants, water and landforms as all part of the same eco system, resulting in no one species having the right to dominate or destroy the

habitats of others.

- Less behavioural issues arise as children are sufficiently stimulated and have stress reducing factors in the environment such as fresh air and room for movement and expression.
- We see that when children are exposed to natural environments, the amount of accidents decreases in comparison to man made environments. Children's motor skills, balance, risk assessment skills are improved through being exposed to natural settings to explore.
- Imagination is fueled and flourishes. In this day of instant gratification, screen times, fast paced society, we are noticing children are not being allowed the time for boredom and to use their imaginations. When in a natural environment childrens pace mimics that of nature and their imaginations kick into overdrive.
- Reducing the amount of waste created from running a centre, withing a nature based setting there is less need for the use of plastics, wasteful products etc.
- Health benefits, getting physical, fresh air etc all has a positiv effect on children's physical and mental health.
- Children become more observant.
- Provides opportunities for team work and collaborative play/projects.
- Reducing stress.
- Improving social relations.
- Enhanced cognitive abilities.
- It supports creativity and problem solving.
- Increased physical activity sensory and motor development.
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Arohanui



Stacey Young,  
Kaiako at Cherry's, Early Learning Centre,  
Riverview, Christchurch.

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160  
24<sup>th</sup> August 2018

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

The Honourable Chris Hipkins,

Dear Sir,

I support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. In nature based early childhood programmes in Northern Europe it is the outdoor programme that is licenced and not the indoor premises. Many of the most successful programmes do not have permanent premises, they rely on temporary shelters.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations where it is the programme itself that is licenced.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There is plenty of research documenting the benefits that a nature-based programme can offer children including:

- increased ecoliteracy – both of individual species and ecosystems
  - greater opportunities for kaitiakitanga or earth stewardship
  - greater opportunities for body physical skills to develop
  - decreased stress levels
  - opportunities for social growth and development in a stress-free environment
  - natural sustainable opportunities for creativity and problem solving
  - improved academic performance
- to name just a few.

With environmental degradation, habitat loss, climate change top of the list of national (and international) issues to be dealt with urgently, nature based programmes offer those of us passionate about our future lead the paradigm shift required. Nature based programmes offer us the chance to educate our children 'in' the connectivity of the earth community in a way building based programmes cannot, and do not.

I entreat you to consider this submission for all the children who call this land 'home'.

Yours sincerely

Pennie Brownlee  
Education for the Head and the Heart

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

31 July, 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of Education Outdoors NZ (EONZ), we support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

EONZ provides support for teachers of Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) to allow schools to deliver quality authentic learning experiences. We believe that learners in Early Childhood Education should also be able to engage in EOTC easily. The current regulations appears to create barriers to this and hence we support this submission.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

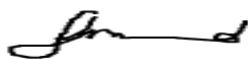
The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Fiona McDonald  
Co-Chair EONZ

EDUCATION OUTDOORS NEW ZEALAND INC  
363 Centaurus Road  
Christchurch 8022

Phone: 027 7331100



Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

30<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of Kidsfirst Kindergartens, I support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Raewyn Penman  
Manager Innovation & Collaboration  
Kidsfirst Kindergartens

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

10<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I, Morgan Clode am writing on behalf of Gems Educational Childcare, to show our support for the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

I am the Farm School coordinator for Gems Educational Childcare in Queenstown. I currently take four groups of 12 4 year olds to a nearby farm which is run by the owners of Gems. I am at the farm with the kids twice a week, no matter the weather. We believe that there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing. The children who visit the farm are not there to learn how to become a farmer, they are there to learn about, appreciate, connect with and develop a love for nature.

The outdoors provides the children with the opportunity to engage in unstructured play, where they develop the ability to self-assess risks, challenge themselves, problem solve and engage in creative role play. These experiences help them to build new friendships and strengthen existing friendships through team work, collaboration, encouragement as well as through experiences that involve turn taking, negotiating and positive communication skills.

I have been running this program for the past year and was also involved in the set up and running of an urban Forest School in London, England. My experience and training in this unique field of work, has allowed me to witness first-hand the benefits of nature education and outdoor programs. I have observed positive changes in children's behaviour, social and communication skills as well as physical abilities. In London, I worked with a child who was a selective mute in the classroom, yet in the outdoors they spoke their first words to the adults and peers. I have seen children who struggle to initiate play and build relationships in the boundaries of the classrooms four walls, socially thrive in the outdoors. Outside at our Farm School and at other similar nature excursions children have space, they have time, they have just the right amount of support and encouragement to take a closer look at nature, observe changes, and develop working theories of how they world works and where they fit.

With our world rapidly changing and new technology presenting itself daily, our children and future generations are at risk of becoming less and less connected to the land and the beautiful world we live in. We KNOW that early intervention works, and we invest money into early intervention for

children with learning difficulties and/or delayed speech, yet the "nature deficit disorder" (Richard Louv) has not yet been highlighted as an area of concern or need for support or funding to help get the children outdoors. With global warming and environmental damages becoming more and more evident and more concerning, isn't it time to start investing in developing outdoor programs that promote children's problem solving and critical thinking skills, encourage creativity, develop resilience and their ability to adapt and accept change. Our children now, and many generations to come will be faced with challenges that we do not even know exist yet. If we are going to ask future generations to save the planet, we first need to teach them to love and respect it.

Gems Farm School is a unique form of nature education and one of the only two in the Otago region. Currently we are providing nature based education, part time, for 48 children at one time. These numbers are for two centres which are both licenced for approx. 70 children each. As a passionate professional, I know that this is not enough. We are not reaching enough children. If legislation was adapted to reduce regulations around building requirements for early childhood education services, we would be able to develop initiatives and programmes that reach all early childhood service providers, parents and even extend into primary school age children, as the benefits don't stop when they start school. Please take your time to consider this submission and proposed changes, but the longer we wait, the more children that miss out on what could be a positive change for our children's, and our 100% pure NZ's future. Feel free to contact me any time on the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,

Morgan Clode



Gems Educational Childcare  
55 Stalker Road  
Lower Shotover, 9304  
Queenstown

PH: 0274741543  
morganclode@hotmail.com

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

31 July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

Dear Mr Hipkins. I run Nature School NZ, we set up and run nature play programmes for both early childhood and primary school levels, as well as running a weekly Nature School and holiday programmes. I have also worked for Whaanau Manaaki Kindergartens for around 10 years, and now relieve for them each week. I heard you speak recently at our conference at Te Papa and I was impressed with what you have to say. I urge you to support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space, in fact, they don't require any indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations. Many early childhood centres and schools are now realising the huge value in nature play and our fantastic curriculum, Te Whariki supports and encourages this kind of learning wholeheartedly.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Another reason I want this legislation change, is that I have been a registered teacher for many years, and mentored many new teachers through their teaching placements; I would like to be able to take centre-based students and/or placement teaching students at Nature School NZ. Allowing us to have a licence would enable many students the awesome opportunity of having time learning from nature, alongside children learning from and through nature.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Leo Smith  
**Director**  
**Nature School NZ**

Ph: 027 438 5366  
E: [leo@natureschoolnz.co.nz](mailto:leo@natureschoolnz.co.nz)

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
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Wellington 6160

DATE 13th Aug 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008  
I Stephanie Broomhall Coordinator at Prebbleton Playcentre and founder of Wild Wednesdays our nature based exploration session run weekly, support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programs in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programs don't require that level of indoor space.

We currently run weekly excursions to be able to support our nature based session which requires extra paperwork and if we weren't so lucky to have a premises for our other weekly sessions we would not be able to provide this opportunity for learning and the best teacher/environment for our mokopuna, nature!

Two years ago we had a child that was scaling our fences, our equipment and confined environment was not engaging as was not challenging enough and he was seeking physical and mental learning opportunities for himself by escaping. We are a parent run Centre so able to adapt, be flexible and have many parents on session that know our mokopuna needs so we were able to react and started exploring at our local domain, it started with the one child then the whole session was moving in to the domain and the gates were open.

This was the beginning of our explorer sessions. We began a term trail of running nature-based excursions weekly, exploring a different natural environment each week. Two years on and we are stronger than ever with full rolls, supporting other Centres to start their own explorer session, running professional development workshops, myself attending the natural phenomenon conference and it is well and truly engrained in our centre pedagogy and culture, why? Because we see first hand the benefits of spending time in nature does for our mokopuna and ourselves.

Benefits we have noticed; relationships strengthened both tamariki, kiako and whanau, connected, belonging and ownership of their natural world, sense of environmental responsibility, risk taking, independence, children getting to know themselves and what they are capable of, this supporting positive dispositions about themselves as capable competent learners. Our natural environment nurtures curiosity, creativity, adaptability, teamwork, decision-

making and empathy, and gives our mokopuna, space and time to negotiate, compromise and self regulate.

My biggest wow moment was thinking exploring in nature would be about scaffolding physical development but does so much more; it feeds body, spirit, mind and soul.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' license to the regulations.

Te Whariki is about being adaptable, flexible, observers, able to do what we need as kiako to nurture, inspire and engage our mokopuna as life long learners. This is just a small change, which would allow these things to be nurtured.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Broomhall  
Prebbleton Playcentre  
Coordinator

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
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Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

22.8.18

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

We at Rainbow Cottage Whangamata support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did

We at Rainbow Cottage run two nature learning days a week a Bush Kura programme and Beach Kura programme and we see for ourselves the positive effects these programmes have for our tamariki ma. Being in the outdoors is particularly beneficial for our challenging children as it focuses and grounds their behaviour, in the words of early childhood expert Kimberley Crisp "Children can't bounce off the walls if there are none!".

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Thanks for your time Chris,  
Yours sincerely:

Natalie Keogh  
Rainbow Cottage  
Whangamata

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

15 August 2018

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

Kia Ora, Chris

This short note is in support of Celia Hogan's submission to change the above legislation which would enable ECE programmes to go full-time **and** Nature-Based

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space, simply because the learning takes place outside (as it *should* be!).

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

As you know, I am a serious (and serial!) supporter of *Nature-Time teaching*, simply because we really need to restore our connection to "the Third teacher". Our ecological thinking has all but gone from the education system and if we are to re-discover the operations manual of planet Earth, we'll need to get back outside.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

So... **This is our chance!**

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Ruud Kleinpaste MNZM

299 Kennedys Bush Road  
Kennedys Bush 8025

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6160



25 July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of Southern REAP, we support the submission to Parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time Nature Based Early Childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before attending some form of early childhood service and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.


Beyond the 'four walls' belies nature – the outdoor classroom, the ultimate environment for a child to learn about themselves and the world around them. As we know children learn using their whole body, nature- based play allows children to engage all of their senses through active exploration of their environment.

Being in nature supports multiple developmental domains including cognitive, social, cultural, emotional, spiritual and the physical. It also encompasses the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes and dispositions that support lifelong learning e.g. resilience, self-control, calmness, empathy, creativity, inventiveness, challenges their fears and comfort zones, problem solving and risk taking.

Interacting with nature enables children the opportunity to develop a respect, an appreciation and a consciousness for the natural world. Establishing an early relationship with the natural world will set the foundations for a lifelong affinity towards nature.

We appreciate your consideration to this submission.

Yours sincerely

  
Maree Day  
Early Childhood Co-ordinator  
Southern REAP

  
Dawn Brocks  
Manager  
Southern REAP

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

Tennille Murdoch  
Founder | Director  
The Forest School  
P.O Box 808  
Orewa  
Auckland 0946

Wednesday 1 August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of The Forest School, our staff, parents and students, we support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

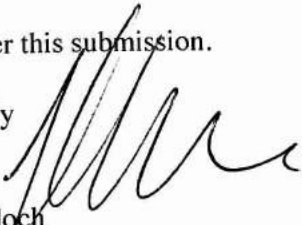
There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

  
Tennille Murdoch  
Founder | Lead Educator  
The Forest School  
[www.theforestschool.co.nz](http://www.theforestschool.co.nz)



www.thermoutdoor.co.nz  
4/432 Manchester Street, St Albans  
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P. 022 644 9967

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

25/07/2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I, Stacey Thompson on behalf of Therm Limited, support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

Therm is a company dedicated to creating high quality, functional outdoor gear for children, and in turn our mission is to encourage a love for the outdoors in kiwi kids. We believe an early passion for nature and exposure to the outdoor world instils a certain skillset not available in any classroom. In the structured, busy and technologically-advanced world we live in, the role of outdoor play that we experienced as children is being forgotten. Nature-based play is proven to be significantly beneficial to all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations. We believe this proposed legislation would be hugely beneficial to the development of nature based learning programs, and fully support this initiative.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacey Thompson', written in a cursive style.

Stacey Thompson  
Owner – Therm Limited

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

26th July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

**A submission from Tiaki ELC Rotorua.**

**E tu ana au ki te taumata o tōku maunga o Whakapoungakau e tu takotako rā.  
Ka rongo au ki te wai hīwawā o tōku awa o Waingaehe iti, e rere ana te moana o Rotorua-nui-a-Kahumatamomoe.  
Ka hoki ōku mahara ki ōku tupuna, kia Tūtānekai rāua ko Hinemoa.  
Nāna i whakatangi tāna kouauau i Mokoia, Te Motu Tapu a Tinirau.  
Ka rongo tōna whaiaipo a Hinemoa ki runga Iriirikapua noho ai.  
Ka ū te waka ki uta, ki Kopuatawhiti, piki ake ki runga tōna paparinga ki te marae nukunuku atea o Ōwhata, kia rongo i te reo pōhiri o te hapū o Te Roro o te rangi, e mihi nei, e karanga nei.  
Ka titiro whakarunga ki Te Kuku o te Manawa te māra kai tawhito o Okahukura ki reira whakangā te wairua e.**

Tiaki is a small privately owned early learning centre, nestled on the shores of Lake Rotorua, just a stone's throw from Ōwhata marae. The Tiaki house is an old family home which is set within a large well established garden. There is a paddock at the back of the section with vegetable gardens, an orchard and plenty of space to run, climb and play. The outside environment is intentionally designed to encourage children to connect with nature.

Tiaki first opened in November 2008. The desire being to create a quality place for children to grow and learn. A place that gave children green, natural spaces to play in and that connected them with both the natural world and the rich and unique culture of the community we live in. The word Tiaki means to 'care, protect and look after' It is a name that was chosen for us by the local hapū Ngāti Te Roro o te Rangi.

One of our arching philosophies is to 'Walk softly on the earth' and this kaupapa is reflected in many aspects of the programme.

**"Mō tātou te taiao ko te atawhai, mō tātou te taiao ko te oranga"**

*Our philosophy of teaching and learning is rooted in whanaungatanga and tangata whenuatanga, the concepts of relationships and socio-cultural, place based education. Through connections and authentic relationships between tamariki, kaiako, whānau, the local community, te ao Māori and the natural world, we are all provided with meaningful learning opportunities.*

The following is an example of a nature based programme in New Zealand. There is growing research to suggest that time spent in nature is essential for all children.

In 2012, the Tangata Whenuatanga competency of Tātaiako, along with a growing body of research regarding the reciprocal benefits of place based education, prompted the teachers of Tiaki to commit to spending quality time once a week with young children in their local community. Since then, the children of Tiaki have spent many hours, playing, learning and exploring in this beautiful natural environment. With the blessing of the local hapū, Ngāti Te Roro o te Rangī, they have developed a wetland on the edge of the lake and are responsible for this ongoing project.

Children connect with nature through, regularly spending time in a natural environment in all weather, exploration both independent and guided, considered risk taking, the learning of local pūrākau and the concept of kaitiakitanga.

By spending at least one day a week at the wetlands the children have the opportunity to become deeply immersed in this natural environment. This enables them to not only make strong connections with nature but to grow a strong sense belonging. It also allows them to develop an awareness that they can make positive change in the world.

“When people acquire a deep knowledge of a particular place, they begin to care about what happens to the landscape, creatures, and people in it. Places known deeply are deeply loved, and well loved places have the best chance to be protected and preserved, to be cherished and cared for by future generations.” - Michael Stone

All children should have the opportunity to connect with their local environment and spend time in nature. Tiaki ELC fully supports the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Gayle Croft  
Centre Director and Kaiako  
Tiaki ELC  
25B Umukaria Road  
Hinemoa Point  
Rotorua

Tiakiearlylearningcentre@gmail.com

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
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Wellington 6160

3 August 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

On behalf of TimberNook Christchurch, I support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

We have been operating nature based play in woodland areas in Christchurch for the past 18 months. Families are seeking this time of experience for their child. I have been operating 2 certified playgroups which have been very popular with loyal families attending regularly. Every-time I put on an additional session or event for the 0-6 age group they sell out in a matter of days. Unfortunately I have to put the cost back on quite high parental fees which would exclude some families from partaking. We have been asked to run 'Forest Kindy' aka 'drop off sessions' where caregivers are not required to stay but with the current legislation and funding this is not possible.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space. To gain certification for the playgroups I have used a Girl Guiding facility so there is the current level of premise etc required to met the certification. However except for using the toilet, and a few times having morning tea inside with stories if it is really a rainy day, we haven't required the building. This was sufficient for a year. Unfortunately due to Girl Guides now going through earthquake repairs we are unable to use this location. Our new location doesn't quite the same set up so I have had to cancel our playgroup licence and access to funding.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
- Enhanced cognitive abilities
- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Kim Tenebaum  
Director  
TimberNook Christchurch  
0279340409

<https://www.facebook.com/TimberNook-Christchurch-NZ-169364596885994/>

Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

August 13, 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature- based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

I have a background in primary school education and experience in home-based and centre-based early childhood and experience with Playcentre. I'm the owner/operator of Woodland Escape, designing and building nature-based playgrounds and advocating for children's need to play in nature.

Around the world we are seeing rising issues from children not having adequate time engaged in outside play. The ramifications are huge and not only have an impact on children's physical health and mental health but also their creativity and success at school. Many centres, although meeting the standards for adequate inside spaces, have outside areas that do not meet the needs for children's outside play in natural settings.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. As evidenced by the success of other nature-based programmes around the world, these standards are not necessary for a successful nature-based school or preschool and are, in fact, a hinderance to the setting up and running. Whilst I understand the need for these standards to ensure that centre-based care is of an acceptable standard, they are prohibitive for a nature-based programme and limit the access to all sectors of society.

The current standards limit what is available to families. The call for nature-based programmes is growing in NZ like it is around the world. The growing voice of families in NZ who want something different should be listened to and respected. The evidence around nature-based programmes should be considered and a way forward with a new 'nature-based' licence should be added to the regulations.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely

Emma Woods  
Woodland Escape  
Christchurch



Hon. Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
Freepost PO Box 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

27 July 2018

Hon. Chris Hipkins

**Proposed Change to: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**

I Jan Beatson on behalf of Long Bay Nature Playgroups, Otami Nature Playgroup, Point Chevalier Nature Playgroup, Franklin Nature Playgroup support the submission to parliament proposing to change the current legislation to enable full time nature based early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

The legislation currently states that 2.5sm of indoor space is required per child along with other standards associated with the indoor space. Nature-based programmes don't require that level of indoor space.

The change being proposed is to add a new 'nature-based' licence to the regulations.

There are more children than ever before in childcare and many of these children are not getting to experience the same nature-based play opportunities that their parents and grandparents did.

There are so many benefits that nature-based play can offer children including:

- Reducing stress
- Improving social relations
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- It supports creativity and problem solving
- Increased physical activity, sensory and motor development
- Improved academic performance including oral language, decision making and negotiation skills.

Please consider this submission.

Yours sincerely



Jan Beatson  
Play and Learn Nature Playgroups

3 Torkar rd Clarks Beach Auckland 2122