



SUBMISSION

Review of Home-Based Early Childhood Education

Submission 094/18

Prepared by campaign director Alison Sutton on behalf of Talking Matters, September 2018

Talking Matters is a campaign of



TE HONONGA AKORANGA
COMET

[COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga](#) is an independent charitable trust and Auckland Council's CCO focused on education, skills and lifelong learning across Auckland and, increasingly, other parts of the country. Our latest Statement of Intent is [here](#).

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Review of Home-based Early Childhood Education.

We want to acknowledge that for some children a home-based, small-scale nurturing environment is an important option. In particular, the opportunity for a child to learn in a first-language environment is terrific.

- **Qualifications**

The Review proposes requiring all home educators to hold a Level 4 ECE qualification, because qualifications are linked to positive outcomes for children.

We agree that building the capacity of families and the in-home educator is incredibly important. However, we have major reservations about some aspects of the proposal:

1. Learning towards such an ECE qualification cannot just be done online. It is likely that many potential in-home educators will have low literacy and little academic experience. People with low literacy are unlikely to learn online. Our experience is that for success, such learning needs to be local, face to face, and highly relational.
2. We agree there need to be qualifications, but Level 4 is too high. It is also expensive, which is likely to be a deterrent to many of those who would want to upskill.

There is a more appropriate opportunity for in-home educator development through an existing qualification – [Whānau Ara Mua \(WAM\): the National Certificate in Intergenerational Education, Level 2](#). This is NZQA approved and available through the Solomon Group. WAM is a year-long, full-time course, based at various primary schools, or Solomon Group campuses during school terms. It is free, and learners can qualify for student loans and allowances.

WAM is a Foundation Level tertiary qualification that can lead on to more study and into work. As a Level 2 qualification, it can provide an accessible, equitable entry and pathway to ECE qualifications for many in-home educators. We believe WAM could be adapted to be delivered through Wānanga.

WAM was owned and designed by COMET Auckland – Te Hononga Akoranga before it was handed on to the Solomon Group to deliver. The Certificate was designed to upskill parents and increase their understanding and knowledge of their children's development and increase whānau capability. It was deliberately designed to help parents put learning and literacy consciously at the heart of family life.

There is more information [here](#) about the benefits and impacts of WAM.

- **Role of the visiting teacher/coordinator**

The review proposes that visiting teachers should have experience in teaching adults how to work with young children and families, and would be responsible for professional development for in-home educators.

We would add that it is vital that the role of visiting teacher and the home-based educator includes an explicit focus on early language.

The Talking Matters/COMET Auckland [submission on the Early Learning Strategic Plan](#) outlines why an explicit focus on building the oral language of infants and toddlers is so important. Oral language is an 'engine' for learning, thinking, literacy and life success. A child's early years (0-3) are particularly important for brain development and language. Language predicts future learning potential.

Language is also an equity issue. By age 5, children who have been involved in rich communication on a day-to-day basis enjoy a huge language and conceptual advantage over their peers who have had less opportunity. Children are more at risk of having limited early language when they are in low socio-economic communities, when families are under considerable toxic stress. Early language is best developed in a family's home language, not just English.

However, the ERO report [Extending their language - expanding their world: children's oral language \(birth - 8 years\)](#) illustrates that many services are not providing quality language-rich environments. Currently most early language initiatives focus on 3-5 year olds and school readiness. This investment does not align to the research findings that are very clear about the importance of developing language early.

The review of home-based early childhood education is an important opportunity to address these problems.

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