



ORGANISATION MONDIALE POUR L'ÉDUCATION PRESCOLAIRE
ORGANIZACIÓN MONDIAL PARA LA EDUCACION PRESCOLAR
WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

OMEP, the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education, is an international, interdisciplinary, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1948 in Prague, to benefit children under the age of 8 years throughout the world. OMEP provides a meeting ground for representatives from a range of professions and nationalities concerned with the care and education of children aged eight years and younger and promotes research and the dissemination of knowledge about quality early childhood education.

OMEP Aotearoa New Zealand, operating since 1986, has five Chapters and members seek to act as advocates for children, their rights and their best interests.

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review

OMEP Aotearoa New Zealand is concerned about children who are marginalized in our communities through Government legislation, lack of policy and/or funding and wishes to address two areas of grave concern; children with special needs and children who have a parent in prison.

1. OMEP believes all children have an equal right to access education. The Government policy of all three and four years old being able to attend an early childhood service appears to be limited by discriminatory attitudes in early childhood settings and a lack of funding for Special Education support. Deficit responses and over use of deficit labeling for children with a disability and difference underpin many barriers to the equal participation of disabled children and their families in ECE.

Issues in ECE include:

- Access conditional on available funding and/or whether teachers view the child as centres restricting the number of hours a child can attend to those offered by an Early Intervention Service (EIS) to fund an Education Support Worker (ESW) or dissuading families from enrolling;
- ESW funding for the 12 weeks of school holidays per year is not available when many centres remain open 48 weeks of the year;
- Centres refusing a child's attendance when their ESW is away on sick leave;
- Centres requiring parents to pay for or top up ESW hours;
- Centres requiring a parent or whanau member attend alongside their child at the centre.
- Education Support Workers are usually untrained in ECE and receive low wages for their work (See Macartney, 2012)¹.
- Limited access to qualified interpreters

¹ Macartney, B. (2012). Protecting the rights of disabled learners and their families to quality, inclusive early childhood education. Report for Inclusive Education Action Group. *Children, Winter, 2012*: .63-66

Recommendations:

- i. That Government ensures policies and practices enable all children to access and attend early childhood services regardless of their abilities.
- ii. That problems within the current ECE and early intervention funding systems need to be addressed by the Ministry of Education and those working in the sector, in consultation with families.

2. Children of incarcerated parents:

Children with a parent in prison are one of the most marginalized groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. Aotearoa New Zealand has a high rate of incarceration and yet these children are overlooked in decisions made about their well being and welfare with minimal apparent communication between the Ministry of Corrections, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Welfare to consider the best interests of the children of prisoners. Recent studies show that government agencies need to change their approach in order to reduce the harm caused to the children of prisoners. Currently this cohort of children is invisible in social policy.

Recommendations:

- i. That the expertise and evidence from local research on children of prisoners be used to draft policies to ensure that children of prisoners well-being is to the forefront of Department of Corrections and other government department decisions:
- ii. Examine using wrap around services for children of prisoners
- iii. Use strategies to prevent the number of school expulsions and suspension for children of prisoners
- iv. Provide services for children who have experienced trauma
(See papers from Gordon, 2011 and ACYA)²
- v. Monitor welfare of children in foster and kinship care
- vi. Address poverty issues that these children face.

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² Gordon, E. (2009). *Invisible children: First year research report 'A study of the children of prisoners'* PILLARS, November 2009 www.pillars.org.nz
Gordon, E., & MacGibbon L. (2011). *A study of children of prisoners: Findings from Māori data June 2011*, Prepared for Te Puni Kokiri. Wellington: Te Puni Kokiri Ministry of Maori Development.
Gordon, E. (2011). *Causes of and solutions to inter-generational crime: the final report of 'A study of the children of prisoners'*. PILLARS, September 2011
Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa. (2011). *Written contribution to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child General Day of Discussion 2011: Children of Incarcerated Parents August 2011*. ACYA Committee, Equal Justice Project