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The Childcare Policy Gap Affecting Low-income Families

Engaged in Non-Standard Work in Aotearoa New Zealand

Abstract

Non-standard and atypical labour is on the rise internationally, fuelled by the proposed economic benefits of a highly flexible, 24/7 workforce. Although many non-standard workers are middle-class professionals, international research suggests that non-standard labour is growing predominantly in low-wage sectors. This article explores the growth of non-standard employment in Aotearoa and considers the pressures that are placed on households to manage their childcare responsibilities around this mode of work. In particular, we highlight how challenging it is for households to

access the formal childcare sector while working non-standard hours. We suggest there is a growing policy gap around the childcare needs of non-standard workers. We conclude by arguing that working households in Aotearoa are being differentially affected by unequal access to formal childcare, at a time when its importance for household financial stability has reached critical international awareness.

Keywords non-standard work, childcare policy, low-income families, informal care

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Non-standard and atypical labour is on the rise internationally, fuelled by the proposed economic benefits of a highly flexible, 24/7 workforce. Non-standard employment can be defined as scheduled paid work conducted outside 'normal' working hours (i.e., weekend, evening and night work) and can be further categorised into temporary and part-time work, and work involving multiple parties (e.g., agency work). Alongside non-standard labour, there has been a rise in atypical labour, which is less clearly scheduled and is characterised by a heightened level of insecurity in terms of the available hours and conditions. Currently, it is estimated that almost a third of employed adults in Aotearoa New Zealand regularly work outside the hours of 7am–7pm, Monday to Friday (Statistics New Zealand, 2018a), with non-standard work increasing more quickly than standard employment in the last 20 years (Ewertowska, 2020). This move away from standard working hours has placed largely unacknowledged pressure on many families to meet their care and family life responsibilities.

International research has emphasised the growing importance of accessible and affordable childcare services for household financial stability (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; Benison & Sin, 2023; OECD, 2018). As parents are increasingly expected to engage in the productive economy, policy interventions are urgently required to meet a widening care deficit for these households (Dowling, 2021; Samman & Lombardi, 2019). Yet, as a policy issue, the scheduling of childcare around non-standard employment has remained largely unaddressed in current 'family friendly' policy in Aotearoa, with most childcare supports tailored towards the typical working day. Considering the changing nature of work for many households across Aotearoa, the aim of this article is to examine the childcare policy gap for low-income families who are engaged in employment 'round the clock'. While this is not a new policy concern (see Callister & Singley, 2004; Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Moss, 2009; Ministry of Social Development, 2011), recent work has been limited. By reactivating this field of research, we hope to raise awareness of the differential impact on households in Aotearoa of unequal access to formal childcare supports.

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This article draws on secondary sources on the growth of non-standard work and related challenges of work/life reconciliation, coupled with an overview of the current early childhood education and care provisions in Aotearoa, with a particular focus on hours of available and funded provision. We adopt a feminist political economy lens which focuses attention on the relationship between economic restructuring and family life, and argues for childcare to be viewed as a crucial social infrastructure underpinning economic activity (Foundational Economy Collective, 2022) rather than a privatised resource to be managed at the individual household level.

The growth of non-standard and atypical labour

The extent to which 'standard work' (i.e., Monday to Friday between 7am and 6pm and comprising a 40-hour week) characterises the labour force experiences

of most workers in advanced economies is diminishing. Within advanced capitalist economies of the global north, non-standard, part-time and temporary labour has proliferated at pace since the end of the 1990s. The Fordist social compact and the related male-breadwinner household model has been overtaken across much of the global north by the ascendancy of neoliberal ideology, bringing an emphasis on flexible labour and a liberalisation of employment relations (Barratt et al., 2020). Today, temporary work, part-time work and self-employment represent a third of all employment in OECD countries, and half of new jobs created since the 1990s have been in one of these three categories (Schoukens & Barrio, 2017). Although many non-standard workers will be middle-class professionals (e.g., nurses, police), a 2016 International Labour Organization study (ILO, 2016) highlighted that non-standard labour is found predominantly in low-wage sectors: the cleaners, carers and retail workers who gained short-lived public visibility during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In step with international trends, Aotearoa has seen growth in non-standard work since the 1980s. This change occurred in line with the expansion of service sector employment, coupled with the deregulation of the economy and the introduction of labour policies like the Employment Contracts Act in 1991 (Anderson, 1991). Intended to make the labour market more responsive to external economic drivers, policies like these had the effect of labour 'liberalisation' in order to increase economic competitiveness. In particular, changes such as the removal of penalty pay rates for weekend work and the diminishing power of the unions undermined workers' ability to be adequately compensated for non-standard hours (Morrison, 2004). A 2018 Statistics New Zealand study of working life noted that a third of workers are now employed at non-standard work times and that two out of ten employees work in jobs where their hours change to suit their employer's needs (Statistics New Zealand, 2018a). This employment hyperflexibility is most prevalent in the hospitality, food, care and service sectors. A Productivity Commission report in 2021 found that New Zealanders were working longer than

the OECD average, with one of the outcomes being less time spent with families and communities (Productivity Commission, 2021).

For some economic commentators, these changes in labour relations purport to offer advantages to employees in terms of work/life reconciliation, whereby employees have the opportunity to negotiate alternative working arrangements to suit their diverse family lives (OECD, 2016). Despite such optimism, other research suggests that the employee benefits of such workplace 'flexibilisation' have not been equally experienced, with middle-class professionals most readily advantaged with work-from-home entitlements (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Research with low-income workers has shown that increased flexibility accords disproportionate power to employers to hire and fire staff in response to economic demand, suppresses wages and employment benefits over time, and overall leads to a casualisation of labour for many (Bernsten, 2019). Today, one in ten New Zealanders are multiple job holders, often cycling between paid employment and welfare support (Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). Research by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (2022) suggests that workers with multiple jobs are most likely to also be non-standard workers.

Mirroring international patterns, women, young people and migrant workers are overrepresented in the ranks of non-standard and atypical workers in Aotearoa (Ewertowska, 2020; Tanimoto et al., 2021). In the last decade the number of female night shift workers has increased at twice the rate of their male counterparts (Statistics New Zealand, 2018a), leading some to highlight that the growth in non-standard labour has gone hand in hand with the feminisation of the labour force. This is further evidenced by the growth in highly feminised areas of employment, particularly in hospitality, social care and retail work (Manatu Wāhine, 2025). While some argue that women, especially mothers, benefit from the flexibility afforded by non-standard and part-time hours which can be fitted around their family life (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016), this is more likely the case for middle- and

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higher-income earners. For those at the lower end of the income spectrum, this element of 'choice' in the labour market is highly circumscribed. Taking part-time or non-standard work is more likely a consequence of inequities in the distribution of unpaid labour at home (Deloitte, 2021), coupled with the continued high cost of childcare in Aotearoa.¹ Moreover, the likelihood of engagement in non-standard employment is further intersected by ethnicity. In Aotearoa, Māori and Pasifika households are disproportionately represented amongst those who work in non-standard and increasingly precarious employment (Rua et al., 2023). Processes of colonisation which have undermined access to higher education and limited career progression for Māori women mean they are more likely to be underemployed or engaged in low-wage employment (Stubbs et al., 2017). Recent research by BERL (2024) suggests that 43% of Māori women are employed in the service sector, and they earn 20% less on average than other women in Aotearoa.

The ongoing decline in the quality of the working lives of non-standard employees has been overlooked (Bernsten,

2019; Groot et al., 2017; ILO, 2016). The shift away from standard forms of work has also resulted in a reduction in associated social security for employees, with less sickness benefit, annual leave and other kinds of in-work supports which are crucial for balancing work and family life (Cazes et al., 2022). New Zealand research suggests that non-standard workers' earnings are consistently lower than those of permanent employees, and they are the first to be made redundant or have hours reduced in an economic downturn (Bernsten, 2019; Pacheco et al., 2016). This instability compounds as New Zealanders face 'unusually large falls in income compared with other OECD countries in the event of a job loss' (Productivity Commission, 2019). Combined, this employment and income insecurity means that low-income workers experience economic pressure to take work when it is available; the financial insecurity of low-income households is the basis of their labour engagement in the 'flexibilised' economy. When work takes such precedence, childcare supports become crucial for household economic viability.

Early education and childcare supports for working families

As our working lives move increasingly outside the standard working day, for many the alignment of childcare needs is diverging from the current formalised support systems. Today, the male breadwinner/female caregiver model has given way to a 'universal worker' model: a political and social arrangement which obscures social reproductive responsibilities in favour of productive activity, and places work participation expectations on all citizens (Fraser, 2015). Departing from the Fordist social compact where mothers were engaged in home-based household labour, we have now reached a juncture where to be a 'good' mother is to be an economically engaged mother outside the home (Adkins, 2012).² As the cost of living rises in Aotearoa (Statistics New Zealand, 2022), women, especially in lower-income households, are taking on yet more employment in the productive economy to keep the household financially stable (Carroll, 2022). The increasing expectation that

women engage in paid employment has resulted in less time to meet childcare and other social reproductive responsibilities, culminating in what many have called a 'care crisis' (Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Dowling, 2022).

In response, there is a growing political acceptance that outsourced, non-familial³ childcare is now a crucial, infrastructural part of our society and economy (Pennerstorfer & Neumayr, 2024). With this acceptance has come the recognition that as a key social service, childcare needs to be both provided collectively and made accessible (in cost and availability) for households (Rostgaard, 2018). As a result, international expenditure on early childhood education and care (ECEC) has increased steadily since the 1990s across the OECD. This spending has been politically motivated by an understanding that as a 'social investment', ECEC provision can offer a single policy response to a range of social and economic issues (Adamson & Brennan, 2014; World Bank, 2024), including gender equality, household financial resilience, childhood educational disadvantage and, more recently, demographic sustainability in the face of diminishing birth rates (Britto, 2015). For many countries, like New Zealand, this investment has been prioritised towards expanding ECEC services, rather than 'childcare' as such. This differentiation places primary emphasis on the educational advantages of good quality, accessible early education for young children in the first instance over the workforce benefits for families which may be accrued (Ministry of Education, 2019). In line with international trends, government expenditure on ECEC services in Aotearoa has increased markedly over the last 20 years to approximately NZ\$2.8 billion in 2025, a figure which sits just below the OECD average as a percentage of GDP (OECD, 2024). As a result, just over 70% of children aged five and under are now enrolled in government-subsidised ECEC services.⁴

Government funding for early education began in earnest in Aotearoa in the late 1980s, when the fourth Labour government introduced a bulk funding system to support early education providers (May, 2009). With seven different

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kinds of services offered, some ranging from sessional part-time hours to full day care, the supply-side bulk funding system sought to support a diversity of services, many of which were already longstanding initiatives in Aotearoa.⁵ While a detailed history of the ECEC system is beyond the scope of this article (see May, 2009; Gallagher, 2022), there are two key points which are pertinent in relation to the emerging policy gap for non-standard workers. Funding since the 1980s has been mostly directed by an educational rather than a social or family policy portfolio, which has historically shaped how funding is provided within the system. As ECEC (rather than 'childcare') funding, there are stipulations set by the Ministry of Education around the way this financial support is accessed by providers and parents in the interests of young children. Consequently, funding is primarily available for services that are licensed to

offer subsidised early education hours. Apart from a relatively small number of home-based care providers,⁶ most licensed services in Aotearoa are centre-based and only cater to the standard working hours of 7am–6 pm, Monday to Friday. Even if the work hours of non-standard employees overlap with ECEC centre hours, most centres will prioritise enrolment of children with stable full day care needs rather than families with flexible and changing schedules (Duff, 2022b; Gallagher, 2022). Based on an impetus to invest in preschool education, in addition to bulk funding, children three to five years old are in receipt of a higher funding payment, the 20 hours early childhood education payment, which fully covers the cost of care for up to 20 hours per child per week. However, services can only use six of those 20 hours per day (Ministry of Education, 2024). For most working parents, their employed hours considerably exceed six hours a day or 20 in a week, meaning that for many the remainder of time in ECEC remains paid for out of pocket.

Outside of bulk funding to services, other sources of funding have been made available to parents through the Ministry for Social Development as an in-work or training benefit. However, these benefits are also to be used within the existing licenced ECE sector.⁷ The childcare subsidy for low- and middle-income working families covers nine hours per week for parents who are not studying or working, and up to 50 hours for parents in work or study, up to a maximum of \$319 per week for a family with one child (Work and Income, n.d.a). For parents under 20 years of age, there is a guaranteed childcare assistance payment to aid reintegration into work and training. Most recently, the Family Boost tax rebate (introduced in 2024) offers a maximum 40% tax rebate to working families on the cost of their childcare, up to a maximum income cap of \$230,000.⁸ However, these supports can only be claimed against registered early education providers, the majority of which currently do not offer long-hours services. For school-age children the situation is the same. Children under 14 are eligible for before- and after-school OSCAR (out of school recreation and care) payments for 20 hours a week during the school term

and 50 hours during school holidays. Again, this support is to be used with registered care providers, which only operate to the standard working day.

Despite the extended ECEC system and the steady increase in government funding since the 1980s, the only source of funding specifically targeting non-standard workers is the flexible childcare assistance scheme. This scheme sits apart from the early education-funded system which most families rely on for their non-familial care, and is intended to contribute to the cost of alternative arrangements for those with non-standard childcare needs. The scheme aims to financially compensate for care given by family members, friends and informal childminders. However, in contrast to the significant funding for the formalised ECEC sector, this scheme contributes \$64 per child for one week, up to a maximum of \$192 for a family.⁹ The scheme makes explicit that families are primarily responsible for organising appropriate care for their children (Work and Income, n.d.b), assuming that non-standard workers do have informal childcare arrangements to draw on.

Finding continuous childcare support for non-standard work patterns thus remains almost impossible without significant financial resources to pay for regular, outsourced home-based childcare or without reliable informal care networks. Moreover, with non-standard working schedules, it is very challenging to access the formalised ECEC services within the existing system in Aotearoa. We suggest that this difficulty in accessing formal ECEC support contributes to new forms of economic inequity between households based on their hours of employment.

The challenges of managing non-standard work and informal childcare

Previous research conducted in Aotearoa on non-standard childcare needs has drawn attention to the diverse ways families establish informal childcare resources around their working lives (Moss, 2009; Ministry of Social Development, 2011). This topic has received more recent attention in international literature in response to changing workforce needs. Research suggests that in the absence of access to formal ECEC and without

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financial resources to afford regular in-home care options, non-standard workers meet their childcare needs through a host of stitched-together arrangements. These include tag-team parenting around work, drawing on family and kin, or using paid informal sources such as babysitters (Gerstel & Clawson, 2018; Richardson et al., 2023). Families employ a patchwork of these options across the formal and informal sector over a given week (Kim & Liu, 2021; Peltoperä & Moilanen, 2024). Although some economic research has argued that tag-team parenting around work has the potential to offer better work–life balance, save on childcare costs, and increase time for fathers to be more involved in household labour (Hattery, 2001; Molina, 2021), other studies have been less optimistic. Evidence from child and family researchers suggests that tag-team parenting leaves little opportunity for families to be together, and over time this parenting arrangement can create significant spousal and relationship stress within households (Luhr et al., 2022). Research on the impacts of non-standard employment for household relations have also highlighted the potential negative social, emotional and cognitive implications for children (Li et al., 2014; Strazdins et al., 2006).

Scheduling informal childcare around work involves time-consuming emotional

labour, usually conducted by mothers, to keep household economies stable (Breitkreuz et al., 2021). These informal arrangements reflect a complex ‘web of time’ (Gerstel & Clawson, 2018) around work and care life, whereby any level of variability can have a cascading impact on the wider household. Acknowledging the ongoing gendered dimensions of social reproductive labour, mothers are more likely than fathers to miss work due to a breakdown in informal care arrangements (Richardson et al., 2023; Sin, 2022). To minimise this risk and establish some ongoing childcare stability, low-income and especially single parents rely heavily on grandparent help as a replacement ‘family anchor’ (Kim & Liu, 2021; Statistics New Zealand, 2017). In such cases the apparent benefits of the continuity of care offered by grandparents serves to also shift the social demands of workplace flexibility intergenerationally (Tarrant, 2010). These arrangements are enabled by culturally diverse family and whānau structures, such as living in intergenerational households or with extended family, which is more common among and often more valued by Māori and Pasifika families (Kukutai et al., 2020). Indeed, the latest Growing Up in New Zealand study data has highlighted the importance of extended, non-parental relationships for Māori and Pasifika children (Growing Up in New Zealand, 2023). Ongoing childcare arrangements can, however, stretch grandparents physically and emotionally (Craig & Jenkins, 2016), often at a time when their health and economic resources are diminishing. Acknowledging this limitation, recent research suggests that familial interdependence comes with unacknowledged non-monetary costs, and that the pressure on relatives and friends to ‘help out’ creates a complex landscape of reciprocity for families to navigate (Cosson et al., 2021). Managing these relationships over time infuses the informal childcare arrangement with significant precarity for working households, noting that if these arrangements break down there are few childcare options to fall back on.

A lesser acknowledged, but significant source of support for households to rely upon is children themselves (Harknett et

al., 2020). Children are deeply implicated in the success of household arrangements of care. International research on child household participation suggests that the extent to which children are involved in household labour is shaped by class, ethnicity and gender. Family income is a predictor of levels of childhood household engagement, such that lower-income families rely on children to meet social reproductive work to a greater extent than higher-income families (Gager et al., 2009). Moreover, children in single-parent households contribute more of their time to housework and care labour than children in two-parent households (Cordero-Coma & Esping-Andersen, 2018). Young women tend to do more than young men, which reflects the typical household gender division of labour (Schulz, 2021). Indicative of this trend, news articles during the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how Pasifika teenagers in Aotearoa were missing school to care for younger siblings (Franks, 2021), with Pasifika households having the highest proportion of parents in essential work (Meissel et al., 2021). Noting that the home informs most of the beliefs and scripts about our productive and social reproductive lives, understanding how children participate and view their role in low-income households will give important insights into how non-standard work is being normalised.

International responses to the challenge of non-standard childcare

Countries internationally have been grappling with the issue of childcare for non-standard workers, and attempts to address this issue have varied considerably across social policy contexts (Bunning & Pollmann-Schult, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2016). Some governments have sought to adapt their existing publicly funded ECEC system to meet changing family needs, extending the notion of ‘flexibility’ into care services to match labour market demands. This tends to be most prevalent in social democratic systems where ECEC is publicly funded and provided and where the right of the child to access quality ECEC is legislated for in policy (see Moss & Mitchell, 2024). For example, Danish municipalities are required to make childcare available to suit parents’ working

Beyond the formal resources which may be offered, research is emerging around the important role informal grandparent childcare may play in relation to the labour participation of mothers in particular ...

needs within their jurisdiction, 24/7 (Larsen & De la Porte, 2022). This support is offered in conjunction with approved, flexible childminders for parents working night shifts. In Finland, flexible ECEC is legislated as part of their publicly funded system and non-standard hours are offered by trained kindergarten teachers (Rönkä et al., 2019). In 2014, 7% of Finnish children attended ECEC outside standard working hours. Yet how young children respond to the extension of non-familial, centre-based care is also an issue which warrants deeper consideration. Research conducted in these contexts suggests mixed findings for young children’s social and emotional outcomes. Negative impacts identified include heightened levels of stress associated with erratic attendance and long hours of attendance at non-standard ECEC. Some positive outcomes noted were that children’s emotional states could be better after an overnight stay in an ECEC centre, as they were not engaged in a hurried morning rush.

Studies from more liberal welfare contexts, the UK, Canada and Australia, have also offered some important insights

into meeting the demand for non-standard childcare, particularly through extending incentives for paid in-home care, such as nannies or family-based daycare (Adamson, 2016; Brady & Cooke, 2016). Traditional associations of childcare with the home have proven hard to shake despite significant professionalisation in the early education sector, and developing a robust and regulated home-based system has been viewed as more palatable for some parenting communities than extending the hours of centre-based care (Adamson, 2016). However, many feminist researchers have raised concerns that the expansion of this largely hidden childcare workforce may introduce additional problems. Affordable in-home care has historically been based on poor working conditions and work–life balance for the carers themselves in an emerging ‘grey economy’ (Dowling, 2021; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003), again demonstrating the cascading social and economic impacts of facilitating a low-wage, 24/7 economy.

Research on non-standard childcare conducted by Lero et al. (2019) in the Canadian context included unique interviews with non-standard childcare providers themselves, including hospital-based and employer-provided childcare. The researchers identified that where these services were successful, they were based on local initiative and activism around particular childcare needs. They also highlighted limitations, such as the high cost of paying care staff for working non-standard hours and the reliance on sometimes ad hoc and pilot schemes rather than a planned and integrated system like the aforementioned Scandinavian ECEC ones. Ultimately, they found that non-standard childcare needed to be considered and funded as part of a wider ECEC system for it to meet parental needs in a sustained way, and that the interests of the child should be at the forefront of this system. Moreover, their research also signalled that families valued any level of flexibility in attendance times which could be accorded to them within the existing ECEC system, as they wanted their children to also gain the benefits from early education.

Beyond the formal resources which may be offered, research is emerging around the important role informal

grandparent childcare may play in relation to the labour participation of mothers in particular (Hamilton et al., 2025). This work suggests the potential for greater recognition of grandparent care labour in policy and funding, as a means of managing the demands of non-standard work. Yet it is important to acknowledge that this work is primarily conducted by grandmothers (Craig & Jenkins, 2016) and likely to be a potential cohort effect of this retirement generation. Current predictions suggest that in future, older women will be less available for childcare responsibilities as they will be engaged in paid employment beyond 65, and that this may be especially the case for lower-income households (Adamson et al., 2026). In addition, research has shown that there is a relationship between grandparent help and socio-economic status, with grandparents from lower socio-economic backgrounds providing more of the 'hands on' childcare (the cooking, school run, etc.) than economically advantaged grandparents (Zanasi and Sieben, 2024). While an acknowledgement in policy of the important role grandparents play in facilitating non-standard working lives would be welcome, an intersectional understanding of how this support could be tailored to different forms of

grandparent help, and ultimately who was benefiting from this support, would be needed to ensure optimum policy outcomes for families and children.

Conclusion

The growth of non-standard and atypical forms of labour creates a childcare gap for many families in Aotearoa. Low-income families who are engaged in non-standard, atypical and increasingly precarious work, where employment is taken whenever it is available, are more likely to struggle to meet their childcare needs. These families are also least likely to have the financial resources to access other forms of paid childcare through the market (nannies or in-home carers). The continued assumption of a standard workday in family policy is misaligned with the flexibilisation of the economy. As access to quality and affordable childcare is increasingly recognised as being central to household financial stability, we suggest that the current childcare gap for non-standard workers produces economic inequities between households.

Research into the kinds of strategies families with non-standard work deploy to reconcile their work and care lives demonstrates the potentially cascading impact non-standard employment has on

wider family and kin networks. In this article we have brought together international examples of non-standard childcare to show what could be possible, particularly if it is factored into wider ECEC frameworks as part of a publicly funded system. Without a fundamental reconceptualisation of care as an essential social support for working families today rather than an individualised responsibility, the current approach risks exacerbating inequalities for many families and their children.

- 1 Data suggests that a couple in Aotearoa working full-time with an average income and two young children will pay 23% of their after-tax income towards childcare (OECD, 2022). It is worth noting, however, that the cost of childcare varies across Aotearoa, from \$260 to over \$450 per 50-hour week (Taunton, 2022). While these statistics have been debated, public and media narratives echo parental concerns that the cost of childcare has become prohibitive for many low- and middle-income households (Duff, 2022a).
- 2 Yet, despite the political rhetoric around gender equity in Aotearoa, women are still responsible for most of the social reproductive labour (Deloitte, 2021).
- 3 By non-familial childcare we mean care outside direct familial relations.
- 4 This statistic varies by age group, with three-to-five-year-olds reaching approximately 90% attendance through receiving higher rates of government funding.
- 5 Some services have had a variable funding relationship with government, which has undermined their success. For example, kōhanga reo have been undermined through periods of exclusion from key government funding initiatives (Gallagher, 2021).
- 6 In 2023 approximately 7% of preschool-aged children attended home-based care in Aotearoa (Statistics New Zealand, 2023).
- 7 In addition, as Sin (2022) notes, many families do not know they are eligible for these childcare supports, and they can be administratively burdensome to access.
- 8 See Gallagher, 2023 for a review of the problems with tax rebate schemes for childcare affordability.
- 9 The 'child' must be 13 years or younger to be eligible and there is no income threshold for this payment.

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Save the Dates

Master of Public Policy (MPP) 50th Anniversary

26-27 August 2026 in Wellington

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Master of Public Policy at the School of Government, Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. Please join us in celebrating this achievement with a series of events this August.

Wednesday 26 August The celebrations will begin with the annual lecture by the Sir Frank Holmes Fellow in Public Policy on Wednesday evening.

Thursday 27 August There will be a one-day symposium on 'The Future of Public Policy'. The day will feature four themed sessions: Climate and Resilience; the Digital State – AI and Public Services; Social Equity, Wellbeing and Inclusivity, and Democracy Under Pressure, Trust, Polarisation and Public Leadership. The celebrations will close with an evening event at Parliament featuring short

speeches and the opportunity to socialise.

All alumni will have the option of joining for part, or all, of the celebrations.

More information will be available in due course.

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