A POLICY TO END STREAMING IN AOTEAROA

CONTENTS

1.   That the report be received.

2.   That PPTA Te Wehengarua acknowledge the historic and present harm caused to rangatahi Māori through the practice of streaming.

3.   That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocate for the removal of streaming in NZ secondary schools by 2030.

4.   That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocate for increased resourcing to enable schools to move away from the practice of streaming by 2030.

5.   That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocate for the development of quality professional learning to support schools and teachers in this mahi.

6.   That PPTA Te Wehengarua works with Tokona Te Raki, the Ministry of Education, and other organisations who are undertaking the mahi to destream Aotearoa New Zealand schools.

1.   HE KUPU WHAKATAKI - INTRODUCTION

"All of the international research is very clear, streaming does more harm than good, it isn't justified, it's wrong, it's discriminatory, it's unfair and...I acknowledge in the NZ context where streaming exists, and it shouldn't exist, that it's Māori and Pasifika who are disadvantaged by that. NZ based research has been very, very clear, streaming leads to lower expectations for Māori and Pasifika students and that's not okay.[1]"

Rt. Hon Minister Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education, 2020

1.1   In June 2021, the Secondary Principals' Council (SPC) referred the work of Tokona Te Raki, *Ending Streaming in Aotearoa[2]* to the PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive. The Executive undertook that PPTA Te Wehengarua would develop a policy on streaming in secondary schools, noting that SPC intended to support Tokona Te Raki and their work with the education sector on ending streaming. The Executive also agreed that the practice of streaming causes harm, in particular for rangatahi Māori.

1.2   Since this time, we have consulted with member groups and participated in hui with Tokona Te Raki towards the *Ending Streaming: The Action Plan[3]*. This was done with the caveat that the PPTA Te Wehengarua does not currently have a policy position on streaming.

1.3   This conference paper presents a policy position on streaming that will likely invite debate. There are some system-wide truths that do not reflect the experience and practice of individual teachers. It is, however, the position of the paper that streaming in schools is a harmful practice and that we must work with the wider education sector to see the end of streaming in Aotearoa New Zealand schools by 2030.

2.   LESSONS FROM HISTORY

What is clear from data over many years is that the education system has consistently failed whānau, hapū, and iwi for many generations, and this has led to low expectations by all of education system performance for Māori and of Māori achievement.

Ministry of Education[4]

2.1   The *purpose* of a formal and compulsory education system will impact the policies and practices of that system, and the history of education in Aotearoa New Zealand cannot be separated from our colonial past.

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[1] Rt Hon Minister Hipkins, C. 'The Hui', 23rd August 2020 TV3, in *Ending Streaming in Aotearoa,* Tokona Te Raki, Retrieved from http://www.maorifutures.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TTR_Streaming_Document.pdf

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Ending Streaming: The Action Plan* is a document currently being developed and will be published in 2023.

[4] Ministry of Education (2008) in *Education for Māori: Context for our proposed audit work until 2017*, Retrieved from https://oag.parliament.nz/2012/education-for-maori/part3.htm

2.2   The first mission school opened in the Bay of Islands in 1816, with instruction being given in Te Reo Māori. It wasn't long, however, before the colonial government began using the system to create and reinforce inequity. In 1862, school inspector reports to the House of Representatives stated that "a refined education or high mental culture" would be inappropriate for Māori because "they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour".[5]

2.3   The Native Schools Act was passed in 1867 which saw Māori provide land for government schools, the latter providing both buildings and teachers. In 1903, a nationwide policy was introduced to discourage the use of Te Reo Māori in both playground and classroom, with corporal punishment being used to enforce the 'ban'. In 1915, the annual report from the Inspector of Native Schools included the statement:

> "So far as the Department is concerned, there is no encouragement given to [Māori] boys who wish to enter the learned professions. The aim is to turn, if possible, their attention to the branches of industry for which the Māori seems best suited."[6]

2.4   Our profession has always pushed back on 'bad' policies. In 1930, the New Zealand Federation of Teachers (consisting of early iterations of the PPTA and NZEI) attempted to have Te Reo Māori introduced into the curriculum, but this was blocked by the Director of Education who said that it was his view that the "natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Māori", and that education "should lead the Māori lad to be a good farmer and the Māori girl to be a good farmer's wife"[7].

2.5   There is also no doubt that debate around the practice of streaming has been in existence for as long as there has been formal education. In 1932, R.D Billet wrote:

> 'Perhaps no plan, method or device for reaching the individual through class instruction has evoked more words, written or spoken, during the past ten years that homogenous or ability grouping'[8]

2.6   In 1969 the PPTA Curriculum Review Group published 'Education in Change' questioning (among other things), the practice of streaming in secondary schools.[9] Perhaps it might also be of interest to note that the 1976 NZCER Set journal from which the aforementioned information was taken, contained articles on topics such as corporal punishment, open plan learning environments, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and spelling. As much as things change, they also stay the same.

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[5] *Education for Māori: Context for our proposed audit work until 2017*, Retrieved from https://oag.parliament.nz/2012/education-for-maori/part3.htm
[6] *Education for Māori: Context for our proposed audit work until 2017*, Retrieved from https://oag.parliament.nz/2012/education-for-maori/part3.htm
[7] Ibid.
[8] To Stream or Not to Stream? *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, (2). doi:10.18296/set.1438, pg 2
[9] Ibid, pg 2

3.1   Coming back to the purpose of formal education, we must consider the role it plays in shaping our wider society. As a people, we in Aotearoa New Zealand pride ourselves on the egalitarian nature of our society, and we believe that every child has the right to a "good education, meaningful employment and a decent income in order to thrive"[10]. The Ministry of Education's policy is that schools should not stream, but the current system of autonomous schools makes it difficult to implement non-mandated change.

3.2   The inequity created by streaming is not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, and neither is the discussion around the harm that it creates. It is also common practice in countries such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and in the United States, where it is known as tracking. Much of the American research uses the word segregation when describing the practice of streaming; a term so loaded, that the implication is clear[11].

3.3   Research shows that streaming creates and exacerbates inequity; and that streaming "helps to perpetuate influences from the social class background, by segregation of students from different social classes in different streams"[12]. There are often fears that higher-achieving students will be unfairly 'stunted' through being placed in a more heterogenous classroom. In reality, the opposite appears to be true, and students both "gained socially, and did *not* suffer academically, from being placed in non-streamed classes".[13]

> *"Addressing barriers to equitable attainment continues to be a priority for NZQA, especially for Māori and Pacific students, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities or special learning needs…While attainment for Māori and Pacific students has held up during 2021 compared with 2019, the underlying equity gap remains"[14].*

3.4   There is a movement afoot, to address the systemic bias across the education sector. Our constitution states that we, PPTA Te Wehengarua, will affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and this means we have a particular responsibility to show leadership in responding to practices that are preventing rangatahi Māori from achieving their full potential. As the professional body of secondary teachers, the Association has a responsibility to promote best professional practice in teaching and learning.

3.5   By 2030, 'about 30% of our students, and therefore our future workforce, will be Māori'.[15] The best time to create a more equitable education system, and society, was yesterday.

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[10] He Awa Ara Rau – A Journey of Many Paths. (2020). Tokona Te Raki, Waikato Tainui, BERL, The Southern Initiative. Retrieved from http://www.maorifutures.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/He-Awa-Ara-Rau-A-Journey-of-Many-Paths-Nov-2019.pdf

[11] Burris, Carol.C & Garrity, Delia.T, (2008) Detracking for Excellence and Equity.

[12] To Stream or Not to Stream? Set: Research Information for Teachers, (2). doi:10.18296/set.1438, pg 7

[13] Ibid.

[14] NQZA NCEA 2021 Attainment Data discussion, 4 May 2022, retrieved from https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/news/ncea-2021-attainment-data-released/

[15] *Education for Māori: Context for our proposed audit work until 2017*, Retrieved from https://oag.parliament.nz/2012/education-for-maori/part3.htm

4.   *ENDING STREAMING IN AOTEAROA* REPORT

4.1   A research and social innovation group established by Ngai Tāhu, Tokona Te Raki has a focus on rangatahi Māori. The 2021 report *Ending Streaming in Aotearoa* builds on a 2019 research report *He Awa Ara Rau – A Journey of Many Paths* which was completed in collaboration with Waikato-Tainui, Business and Economic Research Ltd (BERL), and The Southern Initiative (Auckland Council). The research included tracking more than 70,000-plus rangatahi Māori through education and into employment, with a view to "understanding what propels them forward, the barriers to success they encounter, and the potential levers for change"[16].

> *"All the smart classes have all the white kids in it. It is true but it's not fair. Being in that A Band, I'm proud of myself being there but I look back at my friends and think how are they not here? A lot of my teachers expect me not to do good, not to pass. They expect me not to hand stuff in and when I do, they are surprised"[17]*

4.2   Tokona Te Raki conducted the research alongside the NZ Association of Mathematics Teachers to identify schools that had stopped streaming in their mathematics programmes. These schools were Horowhenua College, Wellington High School, Inglewood High School and Hastings Girls' High School.

4.3   It was clear that, for the schools involved in this piece of work, change was driven from all levels – the teaching team, HODs and SLT.

4.4   The report summarises several common themes which emerged as a result of the schools changing their practice:

- Academic achievement improved, especially for Māori and Pasifika students with more NCEA merits and excellences

- Māori and Pasifika students studied mathematics for longer

- Student self-belief, motivation, and aspiration improved. Students gained the confidence to tackle more challenging work and assessments, particularly externals

- Social and ethnic barriers came down as students worked cooperatively in heterogenous classes

- The importance of ending streaming for all subjects in a school, not just some

- All experienced resistance from some groups of parents and teachers at some point in the change journey

- Professional development is key in supporting teachers in the transition away from streaming and into culturally responsive practice.

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[16] Ending Streaming in Aotearoa Report, Tokona Te Raki (2021) retrieved from
http://www.maorifutures.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TTR_Streaming_Document.pdf
[17] Student voice, Ibid. p8

5. MEMBER VOICE

5.1 With the incredible disruptions that we have faced over the last two and a half years, member engagement in the development of a streaming policy consisted mostly of online workshops and some small group consultation.

5.2 The majority of member feedback has been markedly in favour of destreaming, with a handful who believe that there is a place for streaming based on ability, and being able to focus learning in a way that matches the needs of the students. There is no question that the teachers spoken to have been professional and wanting the best for their students, based on their experiences and teaching preferences.

5.3 The majority of teachers reported streaming happening in their schools in some form or another. This was mostly seen in banding across the cohort, with one or two 'low-achieving' classes, one or two 'high-achieving' classes and then a mix of the remaining students that was largely timetable driven.

5.4 Other examples that are not always thought of as 'streaming' are the use of pre-requisites to enter (usually) senior secondary classes, and this is perhaps the easiest 'first step' to move towards more equitable outcomes for our rangatahi. This was most prevalent in language, science and mathematics courses. Fears were expressed that without more targeted teaching, students would not be able to 'keep up' with learning that not happened in previous years. This is an area that will require a great deal of thought, and resourcing. Making changes here does not mean students will be placed in classes they have no intention of working in. What it means is that students who have a desire to learn, to achieve, are not prevented from doing so by arbitrary measures.

5.5 In one discussion the impact of compulsory international trips, or even expensive national ones, was raised as a form of streaming. If a student was not going to be able to afford the trip, they were essentially excluded from the learning (or provided a miserable alternate option). The question to ask is 'how can we take those students with us?' rather than stopping these opportunities for education outside the classroom.

5.6 Perhaps the biggest fear of schools who wish to destream is the potential loss of students to schools still using those methods of teaching. The Tokona Te Raki blueprint acknowledges that capturing the hearts are minds of whānau and community is important. If the work being led by Tokona Te Raki is successful, this will become a moot point, and we will see all schools destreamed (or in the process of doing so) by 2030.

6. TIME AND COMMITMENT

6.1 With the global COVID-19 pandemic continuing to wreak havoc, and the pressure on our sector from seemingly never-ending change, there is no question that the removal of streaming from our schools will take time, planning and resourcing. However, it is the position of this conference paper that the removal of streaming could align with many of these 'asks'.

6.2 An example is the *Attendance and Engagement Strategy*[18] which was released at the end of June 2022. It sets out expectations of schools including providing a 'welcoming environment where ākonga feel safe…providing engaging learning…and develop[ing] educationally powerful connections with ākonga and whānau'[19]. The report goes on to highlight that just being present in the classroom is not enough. In order for rangatahi to learn, they need to be engaged. The research conducted by Tokona Te Raki shows a clear link to student engagement through destreaming, when it is paired with high expectation teaching. It could be that Te Mahau and the newly appointed Curriculum Leads could be instrumental in supporting schools to destream, with supports at the national and regional level.

6.3 Indeed, the work being undertaken with the 'New Zealand Curriculum Refresh' and the NCEA Change Programme, provides opportunities for teachers to rethink how things are done in their schools and classrooms.

7. ENDING STREAMING IN AOTEAROA BY 2030

7.1 The design team working with Tokona Te Raki included representatives of many parts of the education sector: rangatahi Māori, universities, secondary schools, Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group, MOE, NZQA, PLD providers, teachers, principals, ERO NZEI and PPTA. The resulting document is *Ending Streaming: The Action Plan,* essentially a blueprint for how the education system can move away from the practice of streaming.

7.2 The intended publication date for the blueprint is February 2023. The blueprint has identified three levers of change: Whānau and Community (People), Pedagogy (Practice), and System (Structure). All three levers will need to be engaged in order to see the successful move away from streaming.

7.3 As this conference paper has already stated, our constitution states that we will affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and it is our professional duty to promote best practice in teaching and learning. Streaming is embedded in many guises through secondary schools and is supported by many educators and parents. The experiences of the schools contained in the Ending Streaming report show that widespread change will require system level supports, but that change can be successfully achieved.

7.4 These supports include, but are not limited to:

- Increased curriculum staffing to reduce class sizes and provide targeted learning alongside timetabled classes, to support students to 'catch up' and 'keep up'

- Access to funded, quality professional development relevant to the change process

- Access to funded professional development relevant to pedagogy shifts

- Access to funded professional development relevant to curriculum design

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[18] Ministry of Education (2022), Attendance and Engagement Strategy, retrieved from https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/our-work/strategies-and-policies/Attendance-and-Engagement-Strategy-Document.pdf
[19] Ibid. p 3

- Strengthening connections between schools; emphasising collaboration rather than competition
- Urgent strengthening of in-class supports, including entitlements to teacher aide support and extension of ORS funding, learning support backup and mental health services

8.   THE RIVER AHEAD

8.1   PPTA Te Wehengarua needs a policy position on streaming.

8.2   The recommendations of this paper make it possible for the Association to advocate for the supports required to enable schools, teachers, rangatahi, and their whanau to end streaming by 2030. These supports can include (but are not limited to) funded quality development (both whole staff and individual), and an increase in staffing and smaller class sizes.

8.3   While we can clearly see that the origins of streaming are racist, sexist, and elitist, and that those origins continue to influence our decisions today, they have been entrenched in recent years by a lack of resourcing. Lack of adequate staffing levels leads to large class sizes, and streaming or banding is used to mitigate that. Streaming has effectively been used as a way of masking the inadequacies of the New Zealand school system. Māori and Pasifika students bear an inequitable burden of this mitigation.

8.4   What this paper does not do is lay out a recipe for what schools *must* do. There is no one-size fits all, and there must be community, whānau, rangatahi, teacher and school voice in the act of destreaming. Ultimately, students must have a pathway through their secondary schooling that allows them to make choices that are best for them. They must have the opportunity to succeed, or to fail and then to try again. We must keep those pathways to tertiary study open, or to the workforce, or to whatever their hearts' desire.

"Denying these students access to STEM courses means you have divided society into 'haves' and 'have nots',… If you decide that at 14 or 15, someone is incapable of doing algebra, you are saying they can't have careers in engineering, medicine, computer science and other STEM professions, and I think that's too early."[20]

Misbah Sadat, Deputy Principal at Onslow College, Mathematics teacher.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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[20] Misbah Sadat, in Education Gazette, (2019), 98, 11, retrieved from
https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/no-streaming-of-mathematics-students/

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