

PPTA News

Uniting secondary teachers of Aotearoa



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PPTA News

PPTA News is the magazine of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association. Approximately 20,000 copies are distributed free to secondary and area schools and other institutions. Not all the opinions expressed within PPTA News reflect those of the PPTA.

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Printed by: Toolbox Imaging

Deadlines

March 2026 edition

27 February for articles and ads



ISSN 0111-6630 (Print)
ISSN 1178-752X (Online)

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He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

The significant events of this year are all about people and humanity, writes Chris Abercrombie



This being the last issue of *PPTA News* for the year, my mind turned naturally to reflecting on the major events of 2025 for us as members of PPTA Te Wehengarua.

Without a doubt, the most significant was the passing of Melanie Webber, our senior vice president and dear friend, who passed away in April, two days before her 50th birthday.

As president, Melanie worked tirelessly on behalf of members in every forum, whether that was meetings with the Minister, government agencies and other unions, or conferences, media interviews, school visits, or informal conversations with people she just happened to bump into.

Melanie had a brilliant career in television production before training as a teacher, so she brought a wealth of experience and skill to her teaching role. She loved teaching and she loved young people, and being able to make a difference to their lives. Moe mai rā e te mareikura, Melanie.

The best way we can celebrate Melanie is to ensure that her legacy of outstanding service lives on in our union. I'm delighted that this year's Annual Conference included the presentation of the Melanie Webber Service Award, an award which Melanie largely created in the last few months of her life. You can read about Lisa Hargreaves, the inaugural recipient of the Melanie Webber award, on Page 6.

Annual Conference itself proved to be another very significant event this year in that, for the first time in PPTA history, the conference was held in Ōtautahi Christchurch. While it was enjoyable to have a change of scenery – and more space – the outstanding aspect of our change of location was how deeply the gesture was appreciated by our Ōtautahi and Te Wai Pounamu members. It meant so much to them and was regarded as a significant sign of respect and aroha for all they have been through because of the earthquakes. It was an absolute privilege to be in Ōtautahi and

huge thanks to the Waitaha region for your manaakitanga.

In May this year, workers throughout the motu were rocked by the Government's sudden announcement that it was changing, under urgency, the pay equity law, resulting in the abolition of all claims and preventing PPTA members from ever being able to make a pay equity claim in the future.

What struck me about this disgusting incident was how our members responded. You helped raise awareness of this huge injustice by rallying, picketing Minister's offices, writing to your MPs and making amazing submissions to the People's Select Committee. Members' energy and passion, and active willingness to fight back, were extremely heartening.

Members' willingness to challenge the rationale for change has been very evident in the shambles surrounding proposals for the new curricula and qualifications system. I continue to be amazed by the responsiveness and courage of our subject associations who have expressed their professional concerns so eloquently and intelligently.

The voice of members at Annual Conference has also given us a clear direction for action in response to the secondary school qualifications changes.

Members are not willing to accept change that risks further disadvantage to already disadvantaged students; change that fails to meet the diverse needs of many students, and that fails to focus on their strengths.

Of course, a big 'event' for our union this year has been our collective agreement campaign, and our attempt to get a reasonable and fair settlement that will help address the key issues we are facing in our sector: a worsening shortage of teachers and unmet student need.

We expected these negotiations to be particularly difficult and that is definitely proving to be so. However, members' solidarity, strength and commitment will get us through and you have those in bucketloads! Your action is pivotal – and I want to thank all members for your support of the campaign.

I feel so humbled to lead and represent an organisation of people who know their stuff and who care so much about ākonga and their learning conditions, and the future of secondary education.

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!

Thank you for an amazing year, have a relaxing summer break and I'll see you back, raring to go, in 2026.

Annual Conference 2025

For the first time in PPTA Te Wehengarua history, PPTA Te Wehengarua Annual Conference was held in Ōtautahi Christchurch

About 200 delegates gathered in Ōtautahi Christchurch for Annual Conference this year, the first time in PPTA history, that the conference has been held outside Wellington.

Just days before the conference, PPTA was informed that the Minister of Education would not be attending as she had been advised against it because of the collective agreement negotiations. This was somewhat strange, given that this has never been a problem for previous Education Ministers who have spoken at annual conference during tense times.

Delegates were delighted that Nicola Toki, Chief Executive Kaiwhakahaere of Forest & Bird, was able to step up at the last minute. Nicola gave an excellent presentation about the importance of nature in education.

This conference also saw the presentation of the Melanie Webber Award to the inaugural recipient, Lisa Hargreaves.

We look forward to another great annual conference in Ōtautahi next year.





Congratulations, Lisa

An exceptional ability to tackle issues and determined advocacy make Lisa Hargreaves a fitting recipient of the Melanie Webber award

Lisa Hargreaves is known for her dedication, integrity, and quiet determination. She doesn't seek the spotlight, but her impact has been significant and long-lasting. Her ability to balance multiple roles - always putting the interests of her colleagues first - demonstrates her deep commitment to PPTA Te Wehengarua.

The above words were used by Madeleine (Dylan) Gray, chair of PPTA Te Wehengarua Hawke's Bay region, in her nomination of fellow activist and colleague Lisa Hargreaves, for the Melanie Webber Award.

Honouring exceptional activism

The Melanie Webber Award honours exceptional activism within PPTA Te Wehengarua. Created in consultation with Melanie herself, the award is a tribute to her enduring legacy and commitment to the union and the secondary teaching profession.

Lisa says it felt amazing to be the inaugural recipient of the award. "It was an honour to receive it, and I'd worked with Melanie on executive and stayed in touch with her, so there was a personal connection. It felt good that I knew Melanie and was receiving the award."

Lisa has consistently demonstrated strong leadership at both branch and regional levels over her nearly 20 years of involvement with PPTA. She served on the Hawke's Bay regional committee for many years and was national executive member for East Coast and Hawke's Bay from 2018-2020, having to give up that role for family reasons.

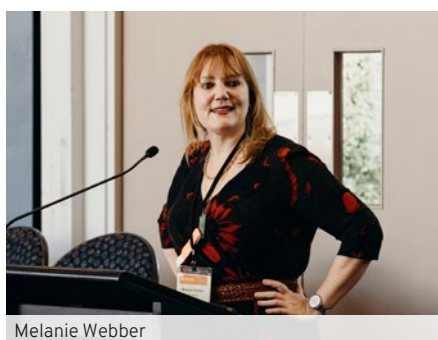
Lisa has served as branch chair and secretary at her own Havelock North High School branch and is still an integral part of the branch committee. "When I came to Havelock North High School, I met Jill Gray (long-time PPTA activist and national executive member from 2005-2016) and she became my biggest supporter and mentor, so I would like to acknowledge her."

Pay equity for part-time teachers

Lisa played a pivotal role in PPTA's



Lisa Hargreaves with her Melanie Webber award certificate at the Annual Conference presentation ceremony



Melanie Webber

legal case against the Secretary for Education and four school boards, to resolve a long-standing equity issue of part-time teachers not receiving the same proportion of (and in many cases, not any) non-contact time as their full-time colleagues.

Although the case ultimately went against PPTA, Lisa told *PPTA News* earlier this year that she regards the case as the catalyst for PPTA winning the part-time teachers' non-contact entitlement in the 2023 collective agreement settlement. "If we hadn't taken the case, it wouldn't have got this far. I feel like we've won, even though it was a delayed win. I'm so pleased that it came about - it is equal pay for equal work."

Lisa says being active in the union is in her blood. "Before I became a teacher,

I was a delegate in the clerical union and it's kind of a family history - my granddad was a delegate at the freezing works and Dad was a public servant and a PSA delegate. My daughter has joined her union now and is thinking she might be a delegate when she gets more experience."

Sense of fairness

Lisa says as well as unionism being in her bones, she has a strong sense of fairness, particularly in terms of people getting what they are entitled to.

Dylan said Lisa's efforts in the complex legal case demonstrated not only her initiative but also her ability to work collaboratively to achieve fair outcomes. "Lisa is known for her willingness to handle branch-level challenges effectively, providing practical solutions and clear guidance on union matters."

Lisa has consistently empowered and encouraged others to become involved in PPTA. Her advice to anyone thinking of becoming more active in the union? "Just do it. You will not only benefit others but also yourself. You will learn a lot."

**Find out more about the Melanie Webber Award and how to nominate people for it at ppta.org.nz → news-and-media → melanie-webber-award*

Thank you for your amazing service

Six PPTA Te Wehengarua activists have received service awards this year, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the union



**Jane du Feu,
Nelson**

Jane has been deeply involved in all events for tamariki Māori, in Nelson and nationally. She

has been particularly active in the organisation of Ngā Manu Kōrero.

Jane has been Nelson's PPTA Te Reo Rohe representative for many years and is a generous guide in all things Māori – always willing to step up and provide advice or Karakia. She is a leader within her community – a wise, much loved and respected woman.



**Paul Stevens,
Tāmaki
Makaurau**

Paul Stevens has been a deeply committed and active member of PPTA ever since he

joined the Association in 2014.

Paul represented the region on the PPTA Rainbow Taskforce in 2017 and the Establishing Teachers Committee in 2018 and was the deputy regional chair of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, from 2016 to late 2021 when he became regional chair, a role he currently holds.

Paul's passion for activism is contagious. His enthusiasm and strong belief in the values of the union are key drivers in how he attracts new members to the PPTA. Paul empowers newcomers to get active in the PPTA and to think boldly and ambitiously about how we can improve and strengthen our profession.

Paul's service has consistently reflected the objects of PPTA Te Wehengarua – advocating for public education, supporting the just claims of our members, and educating and empowering members to take collective action.



**Louise Ryan,
Tāmaki
Makaurau**

Louise was an active and hardworking national executive member from 2020-

2024 and contributed significantly to a range of PPTA committees and taskforces during that time, including the curriculum advisory committee, the PLD Fund committee, the Auckland teacher supply taskforce and the housing taskforce.

Louise also represented PPTA Te Wehengarua on the Secondary Qualifications Advisory Group and the Curriculum Voices Group.

Louise's deep commitment to the union cause and her unwavering support for PPTA members in the Tāmaki Makaurau western ward during a difficult time for the world and the Association, are much appreciated.



**Robyn Bright,
Nelson**

Being a PPTA member has always been one of Robyn's non-negotiables.

She was an active participant in, and chair of,

the Nelson College for Girls Branch for many years before she began serving on the Nelson region committee, first as secretary, then treasurer – and she still holds both roles on the eve of her retirement from teaching

Robyn has played a particularly important role in keeping communications flowing across the wider Nelson region of PPTA and has been a regular attender of PPTA events.

"I always got more out of my work for the PPTA than I put in and would encourage all members to contribute in any way that they can."



**Alison Scott,
Manawatu
Whanganui**

Alison has been a passionate and dedicated member of the Palmerston North Girls' High

School PPTA branch for more than 30 years. Throughout her extensive tenure, she has made significant contributions to the branch.

Alison has inspired many colleagues to become active members of the PPTA branch. Her mentorship and unwavering support have encouraged others to engage in branch activities and advocate for the causes promoted by PPTA.

Alison has always been a reliable source of encouragement and assistance, fostering a collaborative and positive environment within the branch. Her contributions have significantly strengthened the branch, and she truly embodies the spirit of dedication and solidarity that PPTA values.



**Chris Bangs,
Tāmaki
Makaurau
Auckland**

Over his teaching and PPTA career, Chris has supported members in roles in

three branches: Kamo High School in the 1980's, Waitakere College from 1998 to 2002 and Lynfield College from 2010 to 2025, and was PPTA Tāmaki Makaurau regional secretary from 2002-2006.

A deeply engaged and compassionate branch chair, Chris organised regular branch meetings to canvass issues, resolved individual issues for members, ensured members attended paid union meetings both at school and off-site, led issues-based member focus groups, never forgot to distribute the *PPTA News*, and consistently encouraged new teachers to join the union.



Mega-strike in mega-weather

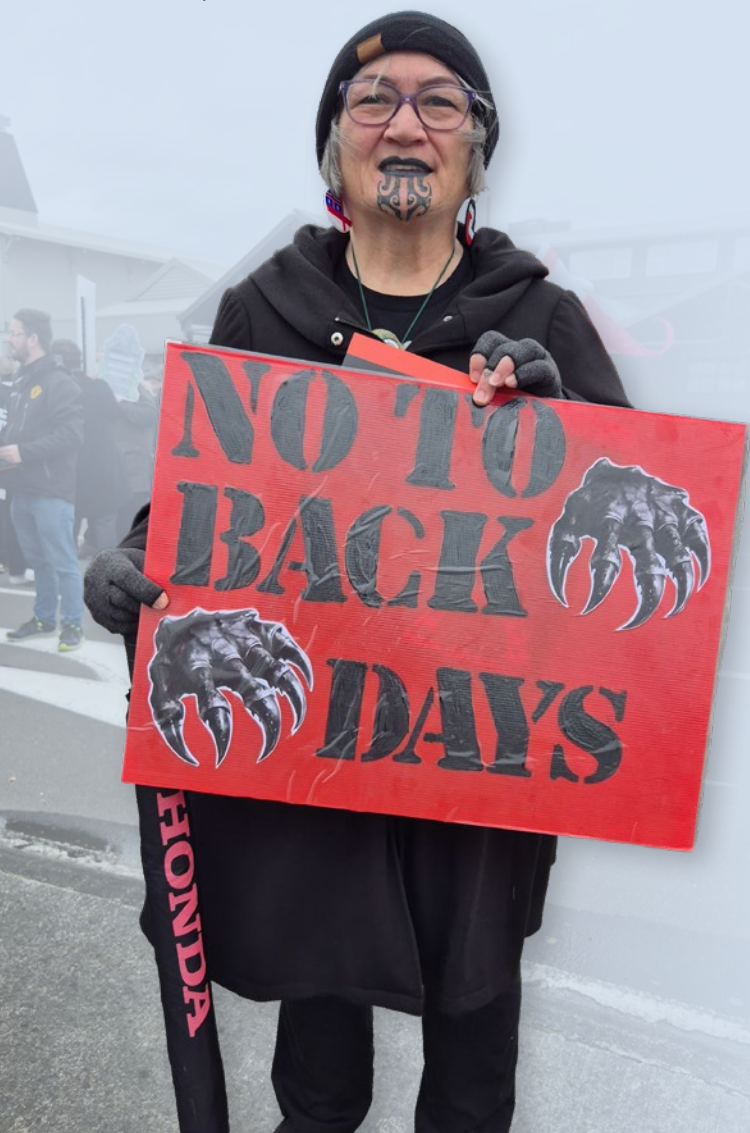
Despite the wind and rain's best efforts, workers turned out in their thousands around the motu for the 23 October mega strike

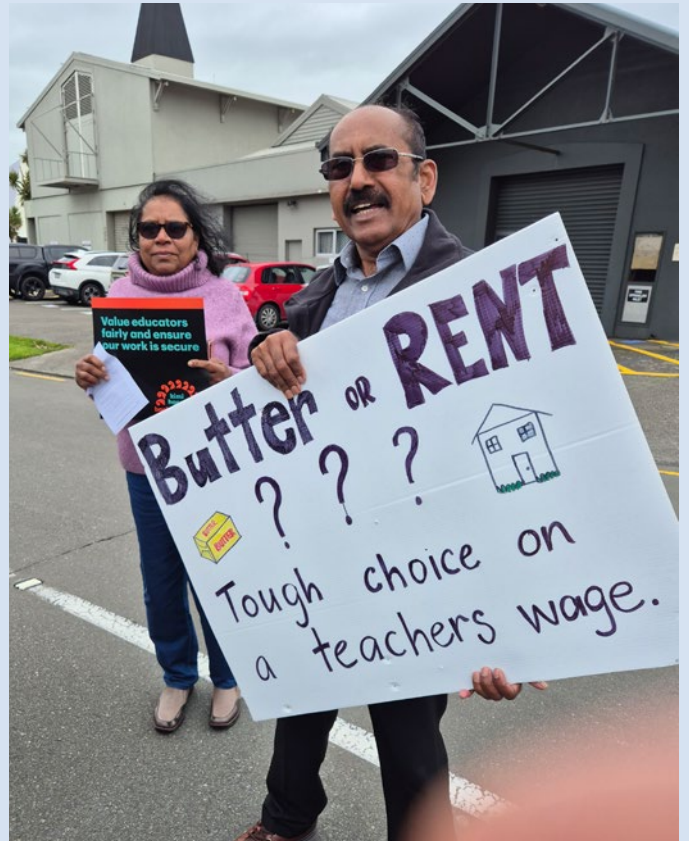
Wild wind and rain failed to dampen PPTA members' spirits on 23 October as they took to their keyboards instead of the streets, writing to their MPs and the Minister of Education, signing the pledge for public education or drumming up support among friends on social media.

Marches and rallies still went ahead in many places around the motu, with the largest taking place in Tāmaki Makaurau and the smallest in Tolaga Bay.

Rallies moved indoors – but were just as lively – in TeTai o Poutini (West Coast) and Ōtākou (Otago).

PPTA Te Wehengarua members are no fairweather unionists – solidarity forever!







Back to the future

Annual Conference delegates question the direction of the proposed changes to secondary school qualifications

Anna Heinz, art teacher and chair of PPTA Nelson region, has a healthy balance of teaching experience in both the NCEA environment and the previous School Certificate and University Entrance and Bursaries system.

“My first 20 years of teaching were under the old system and when I look at the new system and what it is suggesting, it is terrifyingly close to the old system and in the places where it varies, I think it’s worse,” she told Annual Conference at the end of September.

Fewer subjects possible

In the pre-NCEA system Year 12 students could study five subjects, but when NCEA enabled students to take six subjects, the range of subjects offered ballooned. “It made it possible to have all kinds of interesting extra subjects appear in schools. It offered so many more opportunities and possibilities. And it happened very quickly – within a year. I think that when we go back to five subjects it could very easily, and just as quickly, go in reverse.”

Anna told delegates the proposed changes would introduce substantial gateways that weren’t there before. “This is where I see it’s worse – the need to pass a new baseline to go on to the next level, and the literacy and numeracy co-requisites, and then the requirement to pass four out of five subjects at Level 2.

“I think we are going to see huge numbers of students walking away from school without qualifications – just like they used to.

“When a student gets an ‘E’ grade what possible incentive is there for them to feel like they should start again and have another try at that? The whole A-E grading system is old-fashioned, and it’s filled with significance from its history. You can’t say we’re going to have A to E and it’s not going to mean the same thing it’s always meant. Of course it will. And so will percentages.”

An overcorrection

The conference paper that Anna was talking to states that every young



person in Aotearoa New Zealand deserves the chance to succeed in a qualifications and assessment system that meets their needs and keeps them at the centre.

“Schools have worked hard to devise course offerings that meet the needs of their communities, and a wide range of achievements have been recognised on learners’ Records of Achievement by the NCEA.

The proposal appears to be advocating for methods and systems that we already know do not work for all

“PPTA is concerned that the Government’s proposals represent an overcorrection from the flexibility of the current system, which will disadvantage students.”

“The proposal appears to be advocating for methods and systems that we already know do not work for all.”

Backward move

Quentin Barry, an English teacher and delegate from Ōtākou (Otago), said it was now clear that the new English curriculum had been written to align

with the proposed changes to the qualifications and assessment system.

“It takes us back to the 1960s, requiring us to teach texts from the 19th century and to teach Shakespeare. I love Shakespeare but we shouldn’t have to teach him if it doesn’t suit the kids in front of us.

“Throwing NCEA out is unnecessary, and expedient and easy. As a teacher, this new programme will be easy for me to teach, I’ll have to work less hard but is it better for my students? Not at all. My students will be the ones who suffer.”

Annual Conference reaffirmed PPTA’s support for a high-quality, publicly funded, qualifications system that serves all New Zealand students equitably and effectively and reflects the values of public education.

Conference asserted that an educationally valid qualifications system must be fair, inclusive, cumulative, clear, motivating, coherent, constructive and manageable.

It also called for the New Zealand Certificate of Education and New Zealand Advanced Certificate of Education to be subject to an independent external review by recognised assessment and curriculum experts prior to implementation, to ensure educational validity, system coherence, and public confidence.

Courageous and compassionate conversations in the classroom

Calls for a national media literacy strategy and PLD for teachers to help young people exposed to online extremism

The Ministry of Education's recent move to make Financial Literacy a compulsory part of the curriculum is a welcome and pragmatic step towards equipping young people with tools for the so-called 'real world'.

But in the same spirit, it's vital we treat Media Literacy with equal urgency, says a paper debated by delegates at PPTA Te Wehengarua Annual Conference at the end of September.

"Young people are growing up in an algorithm-driven media landscape where disinformation, extreme content, and manipulative narratives are only ever a click or two away. A refreshed curriculum that fails to embed Media Literacy as a core competency risks leaving both students and teachers unprepared for the complexities and risks of contemporary digital life.

Reclaiming role models

"Social media platforms and online influencers - in what is often termed the 'attention economy' - are now arguably more influential than formal education, and many students are engaging with harmful ideologies that undermine respectful relationships, inclusive values, and their learning and development."

Paul Stevens, chair of PPTA Tāmaki Makaurau region, and mover of the paper, told conference delegates that young people were bombarded every day by terrible role models online.

"We must offer a better way and reclaim what it means to be role models. Male teachers must model positive masculinity, and we must defend our colleagues. We must model critical thought, compassion and courage."

Support for targets of extremism

Jennifer Crisp, a delegate from Wellington region, said extremism in the classroom did not affect everyone equally.

"Extremism targets minorities, it targets immigrants, indigenous peoples and rainbow people. Being a teacher and a member of the rainbow community



means that I don't have the luxury of ignoring extremism in my classroom, because it is present and it is directed at me.

"Mihi to my SLT, they do a wonderful job of dealing with it, but hatred and extremism are quickly escalating out of hand, and we know the Government is not going to do much of substance, we know there aren't enough counsellors to deal with it even though we know that would be the best place.

Social media platforms and online influencers are now arguably more influential than formal education

"Our SLTs need guidance, they need to know what to do. PPTA needs to take matters into our own hands and make sure that our members get the support because they need it in their classrooms right now."

Child protection concern

Tania Rae, PPTA national executive member, told the conference that extremist behaviour by rangatahi was a child protection matter.

"The sharing of objectionable material that promotes worrying and dangerous views can be attractive, exciting and enticing to our young people with their partially formed frontal lobes. The sharing of this material with and between

our rangatahi and tamariki is a child protection concern.

"When we see signs of extremism in our classrooms, we should be writing a pastoral note and referring them to our guidance counsellors, that's the job of a classroom teacher."

However, Paul Stevens said it was not just a child protection issue. "I would suggest that the low level stuff is where this starts and that's what we can address. We want to make sure that we can have these conversations with compassion, with care, and hopefully make sure that particularly young men who might be taken down this route online have other voices.

"We need to be those other voices; we need to encourage our students to be those other voices."

PPTA calls on the Ministry of Education to provide Professional Learning and Development (PLD) and resourcing for teachers on, among other things, embedding critical media literacy into a range of curricula, managing classroom discussions with sensitivity and confidence, and recognising and responding to harmful online content and resilience against extremist ideologies.

PPTA also calls for the Ministry to develop a national strategy on digital and media literacy, co-designed with teachers, iwi, digital experts and youth workers.

**Copies of the Annual Conference papers should be available in all PPTA branches. If you are not sure where to locate them, please ask a branch officer.*

It's time to get serious about unmet need in our classrooms

PPTA calls on Government to make courageous commitments to solve crisis of unmet need in secondary schools

PPTA Te Wehengarua members champion the state education system, but deep down we all know the system is broken and is held together by overworked teachers filling the gaps, while vulnerable students continue to fall through cracks, executive member Lawrence Mikkelsen told Annual Conference delegates.

Introducing the conference paper on unmet need, Lawrence said this issue had become a very personal one for him.

"I'm a high school teacher but I'm also a parent. I'm proud to be the dad of two cool, smart, funny and creative neurodivergent twin teenage girls. Both of my daughters have had issues with school attendance over the last few years, due to their neuro-spicesiness.

"One of my girls doesn't attend mainstream school at all now, because the sensory issues related to her Autism and associated Pathological Demand Avoidance make being in a big, noisy space with 1400 other teenagers completely overwhelming.

"Talking to a child psychologist earlier in the year about this, we were told that maybe one of those charter schools might be better for her?"

"There are probably still indentations on my tongue from biting down on it so hard."

The conference paper identifies the biggest unmet needs in our education system as being learning support for diverse learners, mental health and wellbeing services, equitable access for disadvantaged students, sustainable staffing and integrated cross-sector services.

"New Zealand's education system is founded on the principle that every young person has the right to equitable access to quality education. Yet growing disparities, staffing shortages, increasing student complexity, and inadequate support structures are undermining this principle.

"Unmet need is no longer a marginal issue; it is a systemic crisis affecting teachers, students, and school



communities. Providing support for vulnerable students, including those with mental health issues, is identified as the top-ranking issue facing schools."

Lawrence told delegates that one in five students require extra learning support, but schools lack adequate specialist staff, meaning teachers are expected to manage complex needs without training, time, or resources.

If we demand better, we can create an education system that meets every need, not just some

"We know that targeted funding shows strong positive impact, but access is limited, and the complexity, cost and cultural capital required to get students tested in order to even qualify is prohibitive for a vast number of students and their whānau.

"Rates of anxiety, depression, trauma and school avoidance are rising, yet the support simply isn't there to meet these needs. In some schools, there is just one counsellor for over a thousand students. That is not "support", that's just a waiting list. Long delays and fragmented services undermine not just student wellbeing but student safety."

Kate Halls, chair of the PPTA West Coast region, told the conference that if unmet need is addressed properly, it will not benefit just the students with high needs

– it will benefit all students.

"If one student has an unmet need the whole class has an unmet need, and if I am trying repeatedly, intensively and often unsuccessfully to meet the needs of that one student in five, what possible chance do I have of meeting the needs of the other four out of five students who are waiting for my time, my instruction and my attention?"

The conference called on the Government to develop a comprehensive roadmap to address unmet student needs, ensuring it is inclusive, evidence-based, and grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and undertake a national needs assessment to identify and quantify unmet needs across secondary schools.

"We know what the unmet needs are", Lawrence Mikkelsen told delegates. "The only question left is whether we have the courage to meet them. We cannot keep sending ambulances to the bottom of the cliff.

"It's time to build the fence at the top - together. Teachers, whānau, unions, communities - if we demand better, we can create an education system that meets every need, not just some.

"I want my daughters - and every child in Aotearoa - to have a school system that sees them, supports them and values them. Not one that blames them when it fails.

"That's the choice before us: keep patching cracks or start building foundations strong enough for all our kids to stand on."

Messy and interesting learning

Doing things a little differently ensures Ao Tawhiti Unlimited school meets students' needs and keeps them at the centre of learning

Students come and go freely – literally – at Ao Tawhiti Unlimited, a special character area school in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

Anita Yarwood, Tumuaki / Director of Ao Tawhiti Unlimited, says the school building is located purposely in the centre of Christchurch, so students can access learning outside the classroom.

“Our secondary students have trust licences which means they can sign themselves in and out of the building during the school day, and access resources within the central city, including the city library, Tūranga, the Art Gallery, Hagley Park and so on.”

The trust licence operates on a high trust model, as students aren't actively supervised when they are out on a trust licence trip. This high trust model is also within the school building – there are no uniforms, bells, staffroom, or detention system.

Anita Yarwood says the bedrock of the model is relationships between staff, students and whānau.

The school's choice to invest in staffing, as opposed to physical resources, enables it to have smaller home base classes which are capped at 18 students, and students choose their home base advisors. “Some of our students stay with the same home base learning advisor (teacher) for the whole of their secondary education.”

Secondary students have six timetabled hours of home base classes a week, including a kanohi to kanohi meeting with their home base learning advisor. “So, every student has at least one adult in the school who understands them.

“We also prioritise funding for our counsellors, so we have one full time counsellor, and two part-time counsellors. We share the costs of a mental health nurse/social worker with Hagley College, and this person can make home visits and support the highly complex students who are struggling with mental health and school avoidance.

The school also has a high number of teacher aides, as 55% of its senior



Anita Yarwood

students are eligible for special assessment conditions.

“It is the range of staff working with our students, in a personalised way, who make the most difference in supporting the complex needs of students.”

Subject classes are run in curriculum levels, not year levels. “The level of learning for students is determined by their skill in a subject.”

It is the range of staff working with our students, in a personalised way, who make the most difference in supporting the complex needs of students

The school also offers Hapori classes, which are designed around the love of learning and the front half of the curriculum, as opposed to academic assessment. Some examples include Digital Programming, Musical Theatre, Volunteering and Golf.

“Some of our senior students teach Hapori classes to younger students, and students teaching peers is a part of our school.”

Students can build Arotahi (self-directed learning) into their timetable. Students use this time to develop their own

projects, such as podcasting, developing a business, strengthening a skill set, going to the gym, or they might use this as extra time to focus on their NCEA studies.

Students can do off-site learning if this is agreed between the students, caregivers and learning advisor. Students who do off-site learning usually have a goal that they are working towards, which isn't accessible at school. For example, working towards professionalism in a cultural or sporting area, such as Dance or Football.

Anita Yarwood says she feels proud and privileged to be the Tumuaki of Ao Tawhiti Unlimited. “I am fortunate to work with a fabulous staff who provide inclusive education, with a focus on capabilities as well as academic achievement.”

She says a misconception in education is that learning isn't rigorous unless the outcomes are predetermined and measurable. “At Ao Tawhiti learning is messy and interesting, and comes from opportunities and experiences, as well as instructional teaching.

“Accessing learning outside a standardised classroom doesn't negate the value of learning. Our kaupapa is to enable students to be at the centre of their learning, where we underpin personalised programs with foundational learning, so no child is excluded from education.”



How to manage ongoing illness

Being unable to work because of ongoing sickness can be very stressful but help is available

Please note: the following scenario is applied to an illness that is not covered by ACC.

Mason finds himself too ill to work one Thursday and has 15 days on his sick leave balance, so he contacts the relief co-ordinator and says he won't be in until the next week. On Monday, he is still too unwell to work.

He realises that he likely won't be well enough to work until he can get a prescription from his doctor, who can only see him on Friday at the earliest. Mason applies for five more days of sick leave, and his principal explains that Mason will need to provide a medical certificate since he has applied for more than five days of sick leave in a row.

Although sick leave will not be deducted for the weekend, Mason begins to worry about his sick leave balance.

His doctor provides him with a medical certificate and advises that he reduces his work duties for some time to test out some medication.

Phase 1: Temporarily reduced hours on account of sickness

Mason calls his Field Officer, who advises him to look into temporarily working reduced hours on account of sickness, as provided for by STCA clause 6.2.6/ASTCA clause 5.2.6.

Mason arranges with the principal to leave after lunch every day, missing the last two hours of lessons. Mason's school has a timetable of 5 x 1 hour lessons per day. The lessons that Mason doesn't work are aggregated and deducted from his sick leave balance, which means that he is deducted two days per week (2 hours per day x 5 days = 10 hours, the equivalent of two days of lessons).

Mason can keep this arrangement for a maximum of six weeks. Towards the end of this six-week period, Mason realises that the early finishes each day have not made his condition any better.

Mason's doctor tells him not to return to work until he can have some more tests in three weeks' time. With the 12 days of



sick leave deducted for the six weeks of reduced hours, and the seven days of sick leave originally, Mason only has two days of sick leave to spare and now he needs 15 more days of leave.

Phase 2: Sick leave in advance

Mason calls his local Field Officer again, who advises him to apply for sick leave in advance from his next annual entitlement.

Mason tells his principal about this provision under STCA clause 6.2.3(b)/ASTCA clause 5.2.3(b), and his principal allows the maximum of 10 days of sick leave to be "borrowed" from next year's sick leave. Mason still has three days of sick leave that cannot be covered by his current balance or next year's entitlement, so he has to take these days as sick leave without pay.

Mason is relieved to find out that, unlike ordinary leave without pay, sick leave without pay only starts to affect his holiday pay after three months, not five days.

Mason's test results suggest an underlying condition.

Phase 3: Sick leave without pay

Mason's principal explains that the school requires a medical clearance before Mason can return to work to be assured of his safety. Mason is referred to a specialist, who advises that he cannot be medically cleared to return to work right

now, but may be able to return part-time in future.*

Mason writes to his principal to apply for two terms of sick leave without pay. Mason has now taken more than three months of sick leave without pay, so his holiday pay starts to be reduced.

Phase 4: Medical retirement

After two terms of specialist appointments and treatment, it's clear that Mason's underlying condition is unlikely to allow him to teach again, full-time or part-time.

Mason applies for medical retirement by getting a letter from his specialist to explain that he will not be "able to wholly or substantially perform [her] duties both currently and in the foreseeable future".

There are three options for payment for medical retirement, but only one of these options is possible if a teacher has exhausted their sick leave. Mason receives a lump sum of 13 weeks of salary.**

**If Mason's specialist had advised that he could return to part-time work, he could have negotiated a temporary variation of his employment agreement with his principal. This would have allowed him to keep his full-time position, but work part-time for an agreed period.*

*** If Mason had worked for more than 25 years, his medical retirement payment would have been increased.*



How to mentor meaningfully

New mentoring guidelines are an investment in teachers, schools and ākonga

Our vision for the teaching profession is simple but powerful: teachers who are well supported, properly resourced and culturally responsive. And at the heart of that vision lies mentoring, says Lawrence Mikkelsen, PPTA Te Wehengarua national executive member.

Launching PPTA's new Mentoring Guidelines at Annual Conference, Lawrence said effective mentoring helped teachers be the best they can be.

"It lifts the quality of teaching across a school, strengthens staff relationships, and yes - even saves money in the long run. But too often, mentoring has been left to goodwill, squeezed in without time, training, or support. These guidelines are about changing that.

"And at their core are values we all know matter deeply: whanaungatanga - building strong, respectful relationships; tika - acting with integrity and fairness; manaaki - caring for each other; and always keeping the ākonga at the centre.

"These guidelines draw on what research already tells us - that the key to successful mentoring is genuine relationships, built on trust, clarity, and mutual respect. Or, as we like to say, a mana-enhancing approach: practices that are relational,



inclusive, restorative, and purposeful."

Louise Ryan, establishing teachers' coordinator for the PPTA Te Wehengarua Tāmaki Makaurau region, told conference delegates that mentors of beginning teachers are a lifeline.

"Mentors are people we turn to with the big or small question. The ones whose offices we might shed a tear in or celebrate a win with. They are the teachers who make sure their colleagues grow and strive in this profession. It's a role that continues long after our PCT years."

Louise said she entered the teaching profession during an incredibly shaky time. "I trained in 2020 and was a first-

year teacher in 2021. So, I am a fully certified Covid teacher.

"I spent two thirds of my first year of teaching, which is already a very stressful time, figuring out zoom and how to engage students online. What got me through this time was a supportive mentor who made sure I knew she had my back at all times.

"I am now in my fifth year teaching and I'm still learning and still growing but I have an incredibly solid foundation because of my amazing mentor."

The Mentoring Guidelines are available online at ppta.org.nz → Advice → Professional Learning and Development

Pai kē atu kia tapatahi BETTER OFF TOGETHER



Your member benefits program. It's FREE and you can access a range of great discounts! The program also connects members to services, advice and educational resources that support your physical, mental and financial health & wellbeing.

So take a look, scan the QR code to find out more.

Better Off Together is managed on our behalf by HealthCarePlus, a trusted, PPTA co-owned, not-for-profit organisation with a 60-year history of supporting union members' health and well-being.



Members – update your details with us!

At PPTA Te Wehengarua, we share a lot of vital information with our members, but we can only do this if we know where to find you.

If you have changed your school, address, email address or phone number, please let us know.

You can do it online...

Did you know, as part of the PPTA Te Wehengarua whānau, you can update your details with us online?

All you need to do is visit ppta.org.nz and look for the 'My Page log-in' tab at the top right of the page. Once logged in, you will be taken to the member dashboard, where you can update your details by selecting the 'manage profile' tab.

If you have any difficulty logging in, just email webmaster@ppta.org.nz

Or talk with a human

If you would prefer to get in touch with our dedicated PPTA Te Wehengarua membership team, they will be more than happy to help.

You can reach them at membership@ppta.org.nz or call our national office on 04 384 9964.

Leaving teaching? Please fill in our survey

PPTA Te Wehengarua runs an ongoing survey to provide annual information from secondary teachers and school leaders on why they leave teaching in New Zealand schools.

This information is not collected by the New Zealand Ministry of Education or any other organisation from those who leave. We believe this information is essential in planning for the future.

The survey can be completed in five minutes and responses will be anonymous. Just go to ppta.org.nz and search 'leaving teaching'.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Rob Willetts – rwilletts@ppta.org.nz

