



NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL
OF THE POST PRIMARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

NZ Secondary Principals Council
Submission on the Tomorrow's Schools Review
March 2019

The New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council (NZSPC) represents secondary and area school principals who are members of PPTA. NZSPC is composed of 12 regional representatives as well as representatives for Area School Principals, Women Principals, and Maori Principals. The independent voice of NZSPC reflects the unique role principals play in the education system.

Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together is the report on the review of our education system by the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce.

In summary, the NZSPC:

- recognises that, while not 'broken', the education system in NZ has areas of poor performance that need to be addressed;
- is supportive of the review process so far;
- believes the review has identified the most important challenges and issues in the current system;
- is supportive of the proposed shift in balance toward a more networked system;
- believes the recommendations have the potential to move the system toward the stated goals;
- would like further detail developed for some recommendations in order to better understand and consider implications and risks;
- has identified some conditions that need to be met for the implementation of any recommendations to be successful;
- wants to continue to engage in informed debate on the implementation of the recommendations.

The NZ education system provides high quality educational outcomes for the majority of NZ students. The system is not 'broken' however it lacks equity and many students do not achieve well, for example, students with special education needs and relatively high proportions of Maori and Pacifica students. Our challenge is to retain what works well but enable innovation and success for more students. Whilst lack of equity and under achievement cannot be solely laid at the feet of schools, schools do make a difference and so the education system must be seen as fundamental in our capacity to make positive change.

NZSPC is supportive of the process used by the Taskforce to develop the report and the consultation that has followed its release. NZSPC has taken opportunities to make written and verbal submissions to the review and has had representation on the Tomorrow's Schools Advisory Group. The Taskforce has consulted widely and issues raised by NZSPC are reflected in the review report.

NZSPC supports the proposed shift in the balance from totally self-managing schools to a system that gives greater focus on a supportive network of schools. With this comes a philosophy of collective responsibility by schools for students in their area and in NZ. A wholesale loss of autonomy of each school is not required however significant structural shift in the administration of the system is needed to support this more networked system.

What is proposed is a fundamental change in administration and governance of the national education system but only a relatively small shift in the day to day management and operation of a school. Such a fundamental system change carries significant risk if implemented poorly, however if successful it would enable schools to maintain a high level of autonomy whilst also potentially addressing the issues with the current system.

Many of the recommendations relate to the formation of a middle layer of the system described as 'hubs'. Whilst NZSPC is generally supportive of the possibilities of such a development, further detail of the operation and formation of hubs is needed in order to fully identify opportunities and risks. In particular:

- The size of the hub and the extent to which natural geographic boundaries will be pragmatically used to identify best groupings of schools.
- Governance of the hub and how to ensure leadership expertise is balanced and appropriate, political expedience is avoided, and local representation is maintained.
- How to enable each hub to be configured to meet the needs of the schools it serves whilst also ensuring consistency of quality between hubs and the maintenance of a 'national' education system e.g. in respect to learning support provision.
- How to promote collaboration rather than excessive competition between hubs.
- The risk of a differentiated approach to the support schools get or ask for becoming seen as 'only underperforming schools get supported by hubs'.
- Finding a balance between constraints imposed by a hub versus nimbleness and flexibility that comes from complete self-management.
- The extent to which schools will be able to nurture individual school identity and the strengths that this can bring.

For the recommendations to be able to achieve the desired aims, several conditions need to be met:

- High quality well-resourced implementation including change management expertise, phasing and trialling, and realistic timelines.
- Changes are integrated and aligned with other areas of the system being reviewed (such as ECE, initial teacher education, learning support, education workforce and NCEA).
- Broad political support to enable stable transition to new structures.
- Any changes are resourced to succeed.
- Sufficient human resources are developed and supported to enable people to succeed in newly created roles in hubs.

The NZ Education system is complex with the link between cause and effect often not clear. As most people will not have read the full report or be confident in its detail, it is important that education leaders engage in honest, open and careful debate. NZSPC wishes to continue involvement in the review and implementation process in order to:

- engage in discussion and debate regarding changes;
- identify the extent to which changes are likely to attain the goals of equity and excellence;
- identify potential risks and ways to mitigate these;
- identify areas where greater clarity is required;
- and propose amendments to recommendations, legislation, regulations and implementation where this is needed.

James Morris
Chairperson
NZSPC