



Submission

To the Ministry of Education

On the

Education and Training
(Systems Reform) Bill

On behalf of Te Huarahi Māori
Motuhake

About PPTA Te Wehengarua

PPTA represents the majority of secondary teachers, principals, manual and technology teachers across Aotearoa New Zealand. Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake is the national Māori governance body within PPTA and exercises shared decision making authority, guided by Rule 4(c) of the PPTA Constitution, which obliges the Association to “affirm and advance all matters relating to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.”¹

To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;

- To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- To affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake

This submission is presented by Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake, the national Māori governing body of PPTA Te Wehengarua submit this submission regarding the proposed Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill and agrees with Te Tiriti o Waitangi Komiti in that the submission addresses the Bill’s implications on professional autonomy, student learning, equity, and compliance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, and sets out recommended actions to ensure lawful and culturally sustaining education policy.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake (THMM) is the national Māori governing body of the Post Primary Teachers’ Association Te Wehengarua (PPTA). PPTA Te Wehengarua, Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake and Te Tiriti o Waitangi Komiti, including colleagues in the secondary sector have called on their union to take direct action and advocate in opposition to the Education and Training (Systems Reform) Bill and the negative impact this holds for public education and in particular, Māori, neurodiverse, and other ākonga not well accommodated for by a subject-centred curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand.

THMM strongly opposes and rejects the Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill in its current form. While the Bill claims to improve system-level coherence, in practice it centralises power, undermines professional autonomy, reduces meaningful Māori involvement, and risks deepening inequities for Māori ākonga and kaiako. For Māori educators and their whānau, the Bill imposes structural and cultural harms that outweigh any purported benefits.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake asks that the Bill be withdrawn, or substantially revised — with genuine, meaningful consultation with Māori communities, including Māori teachers, iwi, hapū, whānau, and Māori schooling providers.

Introduction

This submission opposes the proposed changes, as they will have substantial and harmful impacts on Māori, iwi, hapū, kaiako, ākonga, and communities that are already underserved within the education system. The Bill concentrates extraordinary power in the hands of the Minister of Education, diminishes professional and community input, weakens Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, and introduces instability that will undermine teaching and learning throughout Aotearoa

Lack of consultation — Māori voices sidelined

The Bill has been advanced by the Crown without adequate engagement or meaningful consultation with Māori communities, despite the far-reaching implications for Māori medium / kaupapa Māori schooling, Māori educators, and Māori ākonga.

¹ [PPTA Constitution 2025](#)

As noted by critics, the reforms “push Māori voices out of decision making, sidelining te ao Māori approaches.”²

Together with the establishment of the Regulatory Standards Act (2025), which sidelined any adherence to Te Tiriti o Waitangi recently confirmed by the Government — underscores a broader pattern of diminishing Treaty-based obligations for schools.³

This Bill worsens that pattern by further centralising decision-making away from communities, iwi, and whānau and the impact for Māori is: without robust consultation and co-design, the Bill risks eroding Māori control over education, undermining kaupapa Māori and te reo Māori schooling, and alienating ākonga whose cultural identity and learning thrive under Māori-centred pedagogies.

Culturally responsive curriculum and Māori identity

Under the Bill, the role of central government in curriculum-setting is expanded. Critics warn that the changes amount to a “ministerial power grab,” giving the Minister and central agencies too much control over what is taught in all schools.⁴ Observers have warned that the reforms “reframe history” and reintroduce a rigid, “discipline-driven” curriculum approach that could marginalise or dilute Māori knowledge, language and a worldview in classrooms.⁵

The removal of Treaty obligations from schools creates uncertainty about the future of te reo me ōna tikanga, kaupapa Māori programmes, and localised curricula shaped by iwi and hapū knowledge systems.

The impact for Māori is having curriculum centralisation threatens to erase or significantly diminish the presence of a Māori worldview, tikanga, te reo, and locally relevant knowledge in the formal schooling system, undermining identity, well-being and educational equity for Māori ākonga.

Undermining of professional autonomy via changes to Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Bill transfers critical powers from the Teaching Council — including standard-setting for teacher registration, criteria for practising certificates, and code of conduct — to the Secretary for Education (a political appointee/government official).⁶

The Bill restructures the Teaching Council’s governance: the number of elected members is significantly reduced and the majority of seats become ministerial appointments.⁷

This effectively removes self-regulation and democratic voice from the teaching profession, replacing it with political control. Unions and principal associations — including Catholic principals — have expressed alarm, warning this removes independence and undermines professional standards.⁸

For kaiako Māori, this centralisation risks decisions about teacher qualifications, registration, professional standards, and culturally responsive teaching being subject to changing political ideology rather than pedagogical best practice or Māori educational values.

The impact for Māori is the shift erodes professional autonomy, undermines Māori teachers’ ability to advocate for culturally responsive pedagogy, and effectively diminishes Māori representation in critical decision-making structures governing teacher standards and professional development. In the end, the proposed changes weaken the integrity of the teaching profession, erode Māori educational rights, and run counter to the Crown’s legally binding obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

² action.nzei.org.nz

³ [The guardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

⁴ community.scoop.co.nz/

⁵ [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

⁶ legislation.govt.nz

⁷ [parliament.nz](https://www.parliament.nz)

⁸ [cathnewsnz.com](https://www.cathnewsnz.com)

Risk of expanding privatisation and forced conversion to charter schools / inequities

The Bill provides a legislative framework for charter schools / kura hourua to operate, including the possibility for state schools to convert to charter schools under certain conditions.⁹ Under conversion provisions: ordinary state schools may not adopt a “special character,” but kaupapa Māori and designated character schools are supposedly allowed to retain their character.

However, the reintroduction of charter schools raises severe concerns: the potential for profit motives, reduced accountability, weaker union protections, fewer safeguards around teacher registration/competency in some charter settings, and erosion of public schooling for all.¹⁰ Teacher unions warn these charter schools — especially those using “limited authority to teach” staff or non-registered educators — risk lowering the quality of education, undermining collective bargaining rights, and increasing instability for staff and students.

Additionally, allowing sponsors to hold single contracts for multiple schools may lead to corporate-style management, prioritising cost-cutting and efficiency over student, whānau, and community needs.¹¹

The impact for Māori given existing inequities in resources, support and achievement, the charter model risks exacerbating disparities — particularly in communities with fewer resources or where whānau face socio-economic stress. Māori ākonga may be disproportionately disadvantaged. Charter schools may also reduce the availability or viability of kaupapa Māori/state-integrated Māori-medium schooling or divert funding away from them.

Tightening attendance rules risks punishing whānau under socio-economic and structural inequities

The Bill proposes to “tighten attendance exemptions,” giving more power to the Secretary for Education to set rules on attendance, and removing discretion over exemptions such as walking distance to school.¹²

While attendance is important, the Bill’s framing risks criminalising or penalising whānau whose children’s irregular attendance stems from deeper structural issues — unstable housing, transport barriers, overcrowding, whānau responsibilities, or cultural obligations. Indeed, critics warn that the reforms will apply more pressure on Māori whānau.¹³

Instead of supporting whānau facing adversity, the Bill doubles down on surveillance, compliance, and punitive frameworks.

Impacts for Māori is that these attendance “tightening” rules risk disproportionately affecting Māori ākonga from whānau under stress and stigmatise or penalise children for systemic inequities rather than addressing root causes. It undermines whānau-led care, flexibility, and acknowledges that attendance is often symptomatic of deeper social issues, not lack of commitment to education. Another key concern is the potential harm to Kaupapa Māori and Māori-medium settings, where attendance practices are rooted in whakapapa, tikanga, and strong relational approaches. Taking away these schools’ ability to make culturally informed decisions would be a backward step for equity and responsiveness and would undermine Māori rights to educational autonomy in line with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

⁹ legislation.govt.nz

¹⁰ [PPTA-Te-Wehengarua-Submission-on-the-Education-and-Training-Amendment-Bill-July-2024.](#)

¹¹ www3.parliament.nz

¹² www3.parliament.nz

¹³ www3.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates

Frequent amendments, mandatory review cycles & instability — undermines long-term planning and trust

The Bill enables, regular reviews and updates of the national curriculum — replacing the historic model of infrequent, long-term wholesale reforms. It grants the Minister the power to change curriculum statements at any time, creating instability for schools and whānau. While on paper ongoing review might seem positive, in practice it creates a constantly shifting regulatory and curricular environment, making it difficult for schools — especially Māori-medium or kaupapa Māori providers — to plan long-term, resource appropriately, and build stable culturally responsive programmes. Combined with reductions in teacher autonomy and centralised control, these frequent changes may hamper the development of locally relevant, culturally sustaining curricula, and undermine teacher/whānau confidence in the stability of schooling systems.

The impact for Māori is the instability and shifting goalposts to reduce the ability of Māori communities to embed tikanga, reo, and kaupapa Māori pedagogies over time. It undermines trust, continuity, and the capacity of kaiako Māori to nurture long-term relationships with ākonga and whānau.

Contradiction with the principles and values of PPTA Te Wehengarua and broader Māori educational aspirations

Principle 1: Te Tiriti is Valued and Visible

The Bill's approach to curriculum, teacher regulation, charter schools, and attendance priority is out of alignment with core principles upheld by PPTA — including teacher professionalism, collective bargaining, public oversight of publicly funded schools, and equity for all learners.¹⁴ It diminishes opportunities for schools to honour Te Tiriti, partnership with iwi are cut back. The impact is it diminishes opportunities for schools to honour Te Tiriti, as local flexibility and partnership with iwi decrease.

Principle 2: Learners are at the Centre

It undermines inclusive, rights-based, culturally responsive education — which is particularly critical to Māori ākonga, whose success depends on acknowledgement, respect, and incorporation of te ao Māori within schooling, not assimilation or marginalisation.

Principle 3: Manageable, Coherent, Well-Resourced Curriculum

Continuous amendments erode consistency and generate unsustainable workload demands.

Principle 4: Teachers as Curriculum Designers

By centralising power and reducing community, whānau and Māori involvement, the Bill risks increasing inequities rather than remedying them. A centrally determined curriculum cannot reflect a diverse rohe, whakapapa and histories.

Risks & Consequences for Māori Communities

If passed, the Bill is likely to:

Undermine Māori-medium and kaupapa Māori schools, or reduce their voice and influence in curriculum, teaching standards, and school governance.

Erode professional autonomy and weaken Māori representation in teacher regulation, lowering the standard of culturally responsive teaching.

Embed inequalities and structural disadvantages into the education system, rather than address them — particularly for whānau facing socio-economic hardship.

¹⁴ [PPTA-Te-Wehengarua-Submission-on-the-Education-and-Training-Amendment-Bill-July-2024](#)

Reduce accountability, transparency and community control over publicly funded schooling, especially if charter schools proliferate under minimal oversight.

Create instability and uncertainty for schools, kaiako, and whānau — making it much harder to plan, resource, and sustain culturally grounded education programmes.

Recommendations

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake on behalf of Māori kaiako, whānau, iwi and communities, we ask that the Committee:

1. **Reject the Bill in its current form.**
2. **Require meaningful, Treaty-centred consultation** — with Māori teachers, Māori schooling providers, iwi/hapū, whānau, and Māori education experts — before any further reforms.
3. **Ensure curriculum design and standards remain inclusive, culturally responsive, and centred on te ao Māori**, and retain local / community input and autonomy over local curriculum implementation.
4. **Protect the independence and professional autonomy of the teaching profession**, including the Teaching Council — keeping professional standards, teacher registration, and code of conduct under a representative, independent body rather than direct political control.
5. **Reject charter school expansion or conversion of state schools**, given the risks it poses to equitable access, public accountability, union protections, and Māori-medium education.
6. **Adopt equity-based supports, resourcing, and genuine partnership with Māori communities** to address systemic issues (e.g. housing, transport, whānau support, socio-economic disadvantage) that affect attendance — rather than punitive attendance measures.
7. **Guarantee stability, long-term planning, and local control** — resist frequent top-down amendments and maintain space for whānau and community-led, culturally sustaining educational approaches.

Conclusion

The Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill presents a dangerous centralisation of power, a weakening of professional and community voice, and a real threat to Māori educational rights, identity, and equity. Rather than promoting equity and lifting achievement, the Bill risks reinforcing structural inequities, undermining Māori medium and kaupapa Māori schooling, and alienating whānau Māori.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to reject the Bill as currently drafted — and instead initiate a genuine, inclusive reform process rooted in Te Tiriti, Māori values, and partnership with Māori communities.