



# Submission

To the Ministry of Education on

Proposed changes to funding for Resource Teachers of Māori

## About PPTA Te Wehengarua

PPTA Te Wehengarua represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA Te Wehengarua activity is guided by the following objectives:

- 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.

This submission is presented by Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake (THMM), the national Māori governing body of PPTA Te Wehengarua. Te Huarahi's role is to advise Māori members, represent their concerns to the Executive, and liaise with Māori members, particularly through the regional Te Reo-ā-Rohe network. Te Huarahi holds the responsibility for making decisions that impact Māori members.

PPTA Te Wehengarua is committed to affirming and advancing Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all our actions. Our members from area schools and Māori medium settings have called on their union to take decisive action and advocate in opposition to the proposed funding changes affecting Resource Teachers of Māori.

Our members work alongside Resource Teachers of Māori and recognise the critical and highly specialised services they provide. We firmly believe these services warrant appropriate recognition through adequate time allocation and remuneration, rather than dismissal or devolution.

## Recommendations

1. PPTA Te Wehengarua urges the Ministry of Education to withdraw the proposal to discontinue funding for Resource Teachers: Māori.
2. We recommend that the Ministry of Education engage in a thorough consultation process that includes Resource Teachers: Māori, iwi, and whānau familiar with the RTM service to discuss role development and future investment.
3. We further recommend that the Ministry of Education allocate appropriate funding for Resource Teachers: Māori, establish a national coordination service, provide clear guidelines, and clarify the role's definition to ensure its continued effectiveness and value.

## Te Tiriti o Waitangi

As a Crown entity, the Ministry of Education is obligated to uphold and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Huarahi perceives this proposal as another attack on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and calls on the Ministry of Education to provide an explanation.

The Crown's obligation to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi is established by the Education and Training Act 2020<sup>1</sup>, which recognises and respects the Crown's responsibility to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and ensures an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and supports Māori-Crown relationships.

The proposal to discontinue funding for Resource Teachers: Māori fails to meet the Ministry of Education's obligations to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi, protect te reo Māori, or address the learning needs of ākonga Māori.

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<sup>1</sup> Education and Training Act 2020  
<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/150.0/LMS280244.html>

## Flaws in the Proposal Process

On 28 February, the Ministry of Education issued a notice outlining a plan to provide 'in-school expertise closer to the child,' intended to be delivered efficiently and equitably.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake supports education initiatives and enhanced learning support that best targets the needs of ākonga for improved learning outcomes. However, we firmly believe that Resource Teachers of Māori, with their specialist expertise in te reo me ōna tikanga and deep understanding of the education system, are best placed to ensure that support reaches the ākonga who need it most. Excluding their expert input prior to public consultation undermines the outcomes the Ministry aims to achieve.

Before announcing this proposal, the Minister failed to consult with Māori—the very community most impacted by the funding decision—thereby breaching Te Tiriti o Waitangi and undermining the Crown's obligation to uphold its partnership with Māori. The absence of meaningful engagement with Resource Teachers: Māori to understand their services and explore improvements reflects a significant oversight.

Instead, the Ministry has prioritised consultation with broader groups, sidelining those with first-hand experience and expertise. This approach diminishes Māori voices and places decision-making power in the hands of those less informed about the realities of Māori educational needs.

Furthermore, the consultation process fails to propose any alternative measures to support Māori learners, who continue to face systemic inequities in education. Resource Teachers: Māori remain the only service dedicated to the revitalisation and preservation of te reo Māori in kura.

## Resource Teachers of Māori

Resource Teachers: Māori were established to address the longstanding inequities Māori have faced in the education system—inequities that persist today and require Māori-led solutions. It is our understanding that RTMs have consistently called for equitable resourcing, yet these calls have largely gone unanswered.

The most recent Evaluation of the Resource Teachers: Māori Service (2008) indicated that RTMs were originally established to support immersion Kaiako in te reo Māori, particularly where Kaiako faced challenges with language proficiency, interpretation, and understanding of curriculum documents.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation also identified a lack of defined roles, consistent guidelines, and effective coordination, resulting in some RTMs independently designing their roles to address these gaps. Investment in national coordination and improved role definition would resolve these concerns while maintaining the expertise where it is most needed.

The proposal to discontinue funding for Resource Teachers: Māori is not an isolated decision but part of a broader pattern under the National-led coalition government, which has systematically de-funded te reo Māori initiatives and deprioritised Te Tiriti o Waitangi in education policy, including the Education and Training Act 2020.

## Demand for Kaiako Māori in Secondary Education Settings

Our own Post Primary Teachers' Association research, the *Secondary School Staffing Survey Report 2024*, provides a comprehensive analysis of teacher supply indicators (March 15, 2024).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Education Review Office (2008). *Evaluation of the Resource Teachers: Māori Service*. Available at: <https://thehub.sia.govt.nz/assets/documents/evaln-rt-maori-sep08.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> PPTA Te Wehengarua <https://www.ppta.org.nz/advice-and-issues/teacher-supply/document/2409>

The report highlights trends in applications, noting increases since 2023, primarily driven by overseas applicants and an increase in leadership position applicants. However, it also reveals that the average number of New Zealand-trained applicants per classroom position has reached a historic low of 1.42, highlighting ongoing challenges in attracting domestic teaching talent. The report identifies te reo and Māori medium subjects as particularly difficult areas to staff.

The Ministry of Education's *Teacher Demand and Supply 2024 Report*, released on February 21, 2025, underscores a general shortage of teachers, projecting a shortfall of approximately 500 secondary teachers by 2025.<sup>4</sup> This shortage reinforces the urgent need for educators proficient in te reo Māori and well-versed in tikanga Māori to support ākonga Māori and contribute to the cultural diversity of the teaching workforce.

Additionally, the *Snapshot of the Teaching Profession in Aotearoa New Zealand 2023* report by the Teaching Council highlights that kaiako Māori feel particularly pressured and require robust advocacy. These challenges significantly impact both retention and recruitment in the sector.<sup>5</sup>

These findings reinforce the urgent need to attract and retain Māori educators to meet both current and future demands. The proposal to terminate a service led by te reo Māori specialists directly undermines the quality of language acquisition support for ākonga Māori.

### **Value of Resource Teachers of Māori**

Resource Teachers of Māori play a crucial role in providing specialised support to students requiring additional help in language development and the educational success of Māori students. They offer cultural and linguistic expertise, helping to bridge the gap between Māori students and the education system. Additionally, they provide vital support to classroom teachers, students, and parents, enabling the development of culturally responsive pedagogies that meet the needs of learners.

Research consistently shows that Māori students who receive support from Resource Teachers of Māori achieve better educational outcomes, develop higher self-esteem, and are more likely to remain engaged in education.<sup>6</sup> These teachers also provide one-on-one or small group instruction to those learning te reo Māori. Evidence suggests that Resource Teachers of Māori positively influence student outcomes by enhancing teachers' delivery of Māori language and cultural education.

While direct, recent studies on RTMs' impact are limited, research indicates that culturally responsive teaching and the promotion of te reo Māori, such as those provided by RTMs, can positively impact Māori students' educational outcomes.

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake asserts that the proposed removal of Resource Teachers: Māori funding constitutes another breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This decision was made without due process, lacked consultation with Māori, and further undermines the government's responsibility to uphold te reo me ōna tikanga. As one survey respondent succinctly stated, "You could improve this by NOT REMOVING IT. Or heaven forbid actually fund it [with] the goal of being successful."

<sup>4</sup> Teacher Demand and Supply 2024 Report <https://www.education.govt.nz/news/teacher-demand-and-supply-2024-report-released>

<sup>5</sup> **Snapshot of the Teaching Profession in Aotearoa New Zealand 2023**

<https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Publications/Snapshot-of-the-teaching-profession-2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> **Bishop, R. (2003).** *Culture Speaks: Cultural Relationships and Classroom Learning*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers.; **Ministry of Education. (2010).** *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

## **Conclusion**

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake stands firmly against the proposed funding changes for Resource Teachers of Māori. These teachers provide essential support to area schools, Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Wharekura. Discontinuing this service would have a devastating impact on the education and well-being of tamariki Māori and fundamentally contradict the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.