

PPTA News

Uniting secondary teachers of Aotearoa



New SPC chair

Page 5

Outstanding activism

Page 7

PPTA goes to Waitangi

Page 8

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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In this issue

Expert panel to review qualification changes	4
Meet Steve McCracken – new SPC chair	5
Your Te Huarahi tīma 2026	6
Ellie Reynolds – outstanding activist	7
PPTA presence at Waitangi	8
Charter school conversions – yeah, nah	10
PLD fund opportunities	11
Farewell, Graeme Macann	12
Living Wage Schools pledge – it's time	13



Making our voices heard

In this year of immense curriculum and assessment change, it is imperative that teachers' views and concerns are acknowledged and acted on, writes Chris Abercrombie



Being a passionate social studies and history teacher, I took the first opportunity I could, recently, to read the new Year 9 Social Sciences unit and lesson plans.

My excitement quickly turned to a sense of incredulity. These resources are apparently designed to help teachers implement the Government's new curriculum. However, the curriculum writers have spent too long in the aspirational heights of educational theory and seem never to have encountered the wonderfully chaotic nature of the classroom.

For example, I couldn't help thinking of all the things that could, and certainly would, happen if I tried to teach 30 13-year-olds about Edward Gibbon Wakefield's plan for colonisation in just one hour, when they have no idea who Wakefield is.

A sense of frustration soon followed as I thought of you, my teaching colleagues, who are experts in your subject knowledge and in the art of teaching, trying to deliver an extremely prescriptive curriculum in impossible timeframes.

Once in a generation change on the way

What gives me cause for a great deal more concern is that this year, along with all the curriculum changes, we are facing a once-in-a-generation overhaul of secondary school qualifications and assessment – the bread and butter of our secondary teaching profession.

As *PPTA News* went to print, we were still waiting for an announcement from the Minister of Education about what the final version of the new system will be, following 'consultation' with the sector. Sadly, we are not expecting much to change from the initial version.

So, while we do not yet know for certain what the exact changes will be, we do know that the landscape of Years 11–13 teaching is about to look very different. In the middle of all of this change are

us, the classroom teachers, whose professionalism is a crucial factor in whether these reforms work in practice.

Reform needs nuance

Our professional judgement – informed by subject expertise, a deep understanding of what teaching involves, and knowledge of our learners – is what ensures change for the better, rather than change for change's sake.

Our professional judgement is what ensures change for the better, rather than change for change's sake

We know from all our experience that no reform is 'one size fits all' – it requires nuanced interpretation, adaptation, and thoughtful design. That's work that only teaching professionals can do.

Ensuring the changes are designed thoughtfully and collaboratively will be top of mind for Tiroitiro Anō – a panel of outstanding secondary education experts that is being commissioned by PPTA Te Wehengarua to review the reforms through a professional and practitioner lens.

PPTA national executive is hugely grateful to the panel co-chairs, Kate Gainsford and Melissa Denzler, and members for being willing to take on this crucial work and we wish them all the very best in their endeavours.

You can read more about who's on the panel and its work on page 4 of this issue.

Get involved

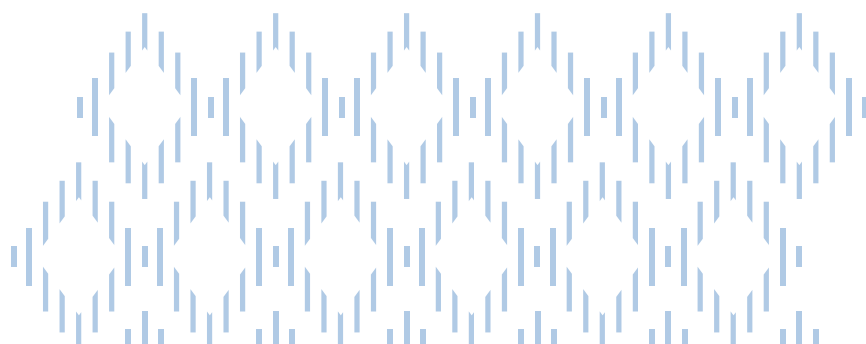
Along with the amazing work that the panel is doing, I would urge each and every one of you to make your professional voice heard as we navigate our way through these significant reforms. If you're not already a member of your subject associations, please join up and get involved at that level.

Strong professional learning communities, adequate resourcing, and time to engage deeply with the work will determine the success of the reforms. To be truly effective, the reform process must treat teachers as the professionals at its centre – we must be trusted, equipped, and supported to lead the change rather than simply absorb it.

While the high-level documents can lay out broad intentions, only teachers can determine what those intentions look like day to day. Our experience and expertise are essential. We are the ones who can see that a standard is too broad, when a marking schedule isn't workable, or when a new assessment model disadvantages a particular group of learners.

As these changes begin being developed and flesh is put on the bones, it will be teachers' evidence, observations, and critique that indicate whether they will fly or die. Policymakers cannot see what we see: the impact on struggling and disadvantaged learners, the load on departments, or the way proposals actually play out in practice.

Your voice – in department meetings, in PLD, in PPTA forums, in consultation processes, and in conversations with your school leadership team – will be an absolutely vital professional contribution. Make sure it is heard.





Tirotiro Anō – with fresh eyes wide open

An expert panel has been commissioned by PPTA Te Wehengarua to review the reform of secondary school qualifications and assessment

PPTA Te Wehengarua has announced the establishment of a panel of highly experienced and diverse educationalists to monitor and review major changes to New Zealand's national secondary school qualifications.

Tirotiro Anō* ("with fresh eyes, wide open, we are taking a fresh look") will analyse whether the changes are educationally valid, robust and meet the needs of all learners.

The co-chairs of the panel are:

Kate Gainsford - Former Principal of Aotea College and Secondary Principals' Council chairperson and former PPTA president

Kate brings a wealth of educational experience and sector leadership. The system and operation of assessment for qualifications in the senior secondary school is of particular interest to Kate. Kate has been a representative of many national reference groups convened by the Ministry of Education, NZQA and ERO to provide advice and feedback from the sector and communication back to the sector.

Melissa Denzler – Kaitohu Mātauranga/ Education Advisor for the NZ Council of Educational Research (NZCER)

Melissa is wāhine Māori, and an educator who is committed to uplifting the mana of our people, our mātauranga, and the diverse worldviews that shape Aotearoa. At NZCER, she contributes to kaupapa Māori and equity-focused projects that centre the voices of those most affected by systems change. She works extensively within the sector to support equitable use of assessment and data practices.

Kate and Melissa are looking forward to working with panel members to help ensure that these far-reaching changes to secondary school assessment and qualifications are being developed and implemented thoughtfully and comprehensively.

"Proposals that are thin on detail and tight in timeframe, work against good



Kate Gainsford

policy and risk short-changing the important sense of public ownership that characterises a strong education system," says Kate.

The panel's findings will be contained in a report, Tirotiro Anō ("with fresh eyes, wide open, we are taking a fresh look"). It is planned that the report will be presented to PPTA Te Wehengarua annual conference in October.

PPTA Te Wehengarua president, Chris Abercrombie, says the establishment of the panel demonstrates the vital role that secondary teachers and principals play, via PPTA Te Wehengarua, to be at the forefront and leading the best aspects of educational change and improvement.

"The panel and the report enable the secondary teaching profession to reflect thoughtfully, and in a timely way, on the significant changes to secondary school assessment and qualifications – our bread and butter."

*The name, Tirotiro Anō, provides a link to a report initiated by PPTA almost 30 years ago that reviewed major changes to the secondary school qualifications which resulted in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement.



Melissa Denzler

What the panel will do – in a nutshell

- Consult widely and ascertain credible voices on the 2025 proposal to change the national qualification
- Consider the input, response and support from the sector to the change proposal.
- Draw on appropriate research
- Analyse whether the 2025 change proposal is educationally valid
- Assess the visibility and application of Te Tiriti principles within the 2025 change proposal.
- Analyse whether the 2025 change proposal meets the needs of all learners
- Investigate the manageability, resource and workload implications of the 2025 change proposal.
- Make recommendations on appropriate responses to the change proposal and further ways to shape the qualifications
- Report its findings to PPTA national executive



Telling it like it is

The new chair of the Secondary Principals' Council wants it to be a credible partner in education that represents the realities of secondary school leadership

The scale and complexity of the job was something that took Steve McCracken by surprise when he became a secondary school principal.

"Principalship is not simply a larger version of a senior leadership role – it is fundamentally different. The pace of decision-making, the breadth of responsibility, and the weight of accountability are significant."

The role is demanding and strong professional relationships are essential. "It is important to build trusted networks early – with other principals, sector groups, and professional colleagues."

Creating a constructively influential voice

Currently in his fifth year as principal of Whangaparāoa College, north of Auckland, Steve is the new Chair of the Secondary Principals' Council that represents secondary and area school principal members of PPTA Te Wehengarua.

Steve says his primary goal as Chair is to ensure that the voice of secondary principals is clearly heard and constructively influential in national education discussions. That includes contributing practical, school-grounded insight into policy development, curriculum reform, assessment change, and workforce sustainability.

"I want the Council to be recognised as a credible, solutions-focused partner that represents the realities of leading secondary schools across Aotearoa New Zealand."

Strengthening principal support, leadership development, and system coherence will also be priorities.

Challenging times

He says these are particularly challenging times for principals, who are navigating sustained system change while managing increasing operational complexity.

Key challenges include assessment and qualification reform, curriculum redesign, workforce supply, student wellbeing needs, attendance, and funding pressures.



Steve McCracken

"At the same time, expectations from communities, government, and agencies continue to grow. Balancing strategic leadership with operational demand – while protecting teaching and learning – is one of the defining challenges of the role."

Steve brings a significant amount of experience, both as a principal and teacher, to his new role as SPC Chair. Before his role at Whangaparāoa, Steve was principal of Kaipara College for four years.

'Principalship is not simply a larger version of a senior leadership role – it is fundamentally different.'

Prior to this he taught Physical Education and Health, and Mathematics at Westlake Boys' High School for 15 years.

He also spent three years supply teaching in London, working in some of the toughest schools in North and West London.

Building a strong foundation

At Westlake he became a dean before leading Māori and Pasifika learners. When he entered senior leadership, his pastoral leadership continued, and he further developed the Māori and Pasifika capacity of the school before moving into principalship.

"Those earlier leadership roles provided a strong foundation in change management, instructional leadership, and community engagement, which continue to inform my work as a principal today."

Ensuring students and adults can thrive

Steve says what he values most about being a principal is the ability to create the conditions where great teaching and learning can flourish.

"That means supporting staff, building strong leadership teams, setting clear direction, and ensuring the school is a place where both students and adults can thrive."

"I also value the breadth of the role – from strategy and system design through to community connection – and the opportunity to make decisions that have a long-term positive impact for young people."

He says teaching is one of the few professions where you see daily evidence that your work matters.

Education the heart of opportunity

For him, the chance to work alongside young people at a formative stage of their lives, and to contribute to both their learning and personal development, was a strong motivator for his choice of teaching as career.

"Initially, it was one of my teachers at Edgecumbe College in Sixth Form who really planted the seed, before I headed off to the University of Waikato. More broadly, I was drawn to teaching because of its purpose and impact. Education sits at the heart of opportunity – it shapes futures, strengthens communities, and changes life trajectories."

"Teaching is one of the most meaningful and future-shaping professions you can choose. It is intellectually demanding, relationally rich, and socially important work. You will never stop learning, and you will make a difference every day – often in ways you may not immediately see."

"If you want a career with purpose, challenge, and impact, teaching remains an outstanding choice."

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake

PPTA Te Wehengarua's national Māori body has been representing kaiako Māori around the motu for almost 40 years

Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake was established by the 1987 PPTA annual conference as a structure that would realise the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Huarahi advises Māori members and acts as a channel for their concerns; it considers and represents those concerns to the national executive, it liaises with Māori members, particularly the regional Te Reo-ā-Rohe network. Te Huarahi has the responsibility for making decisions that affect Māori members.

Te Huarahi is elected on an iwi geographical basis by Māori members of the Association. Each year Te Huarahi elects three of its current members to serve on the national executive. The 2026 executive members are Anthony Urwin, Tina Peters and Irihapeti Nepe-Macdonald.

Elections

Members of Te Huarahi are elected by members on PPTA's Māori electoral roll to represent the following tribal areas: Tai Tokerau, Tāmaki Makaurau, Waikato, Mataatua, Te Arawa, Tai Rāwhiti, Taranaki, Whānganui, Horowhenua / Manawatū, Ngāti Kahungunu, Whanganui-a-Tara ki Ōtaki, Ōtepoti / Murihiku, Waitaha, Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka a Māui.



Members of Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake 2026

Kaumātua and Whaea

The Kaumātua and Whaea, currently Moeke Paaka and Gazala Maihi, are appointed by Te Huarahi to assist and support Association matters and participate in all aspects of the Association.

Māori Teachers' Conference

Te Huarahi organises the annual PPTA Te Wehengarua Māori Teachers' Conference (MTC), held in July each year and usually in Rotorua. The conference programme has a strong education focus that

includes professional learning, wellbeing and support, and union education, which are all provided through a mix of keynote speakers, panels and workshops.

MTC is a wonderful networking opportunity for kaiako Māori who can be very isolated in their schools. The conference also provides invaluable professional learning for non-Māori members.

The conference is open to any member who wishes to register – it is very popular and registrations fill up quickly.



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Advocacy matters

Ellie Reynolds is happy to be the persistent voice in the room if it means colleagues get the support they deserve

Ellie Reynolds describes herself as being someone who has always stood up for others, particularly when they feel they cannot speak up themselves.

“I don’t mind being the persistent voice in the room. Advocacy matters, and sometimes it simply takes someone willing to ask the hard questions and keep pushing until issues are addressed. If we want strong conditions and a healthy workplace, someone has to step forward.”

Ellie, Head of Psychology and Media Studies at Pukekohe High School, is the 2025 recipient of the PPTA Te Wehengarua Guy Allan award for outstanding branch activism.*

Initiative and determination

Natalie Faitala, PPTA national executive member for Counties Manukau, nominated Ellie for the award in recognition of her consistent and outstanding contribution to the Pukekohe High School branch and the Counties Manukau region.

“Since joining Pukekohe High School three years ago, Ellie has been at the forefront of branch activities, demonstrating initiative and determination in addressing issues raised by members. No matter the scale of the concern, she ensures that every matter is given her full attention and advocacy.

“Ellie takes up the issues of all members who come to her often acting as mediator or support person.”

Resolving issues effectively

Natalie said the PPTA Tāmaki Makaurau field office had noted that, as a result of Ellie’s strong advocacy, issues were often resolved before field officer intervention was required.

Recently, Ellie’s school underwent significant timetable changes, including moving to 55-minute periods and adjusting form time to contact time. These changes had implications for contact hours, non-contact allocations, and workload calculations. It was a complex and high-stakes process.



Ellie Reynolds, receiving the Guy Allan award for 2025

Ellie facilitated multiple branch meetings, worked closely with the local field officer, and met regularly with the principal to ensure that the collective agreement was upheld and that teachers’ working conditions were protected as much as possible.

Being able to provide guidance, reassurance, and representation when it is needed most has been incredibly meaningful

Fairness and integrity

“Managing change is never easy, and there were certainly challenging moments. However, I am proud that through open communication and persistent advocacy, we achieved a fair outcome and maintained the integrity of the school’s vision.”

Ellie has been a PPTA member since graduating as a teacher in 2013. “I come from a family that has always been proud of union membership, so joining PPTA felt like a natural step.

“For me, it was about knowing there was a collective voice protecting our working conditions and advocating for fairness. Teaching is a demanding profession, and I wanted to be part of an organisation that ensures teachers are supported, respected, and able to do their jobs well.”

Helping others regain confidence

One of the biggest highlights of being a PPTA member for Ellie has been connecting with colleagues during some of their most challenging moments and seeing them regain confidence and a sense of agency.

“Teaching is complex, emotional, and at times exhausting work. We are human—we make mistakes, we face pressure, and we need support. Being able to provide guidance, reassurance, and representation when it is needed most has been incredibly meaningful.”

Natalie says Ellie has also played a significant role as regional secretary in strengthening the wider Counties-Manukau region.

“Her energy, commitment and skill have ensured that both regional paid union meetings and regional strike action have been well organised.

“Ellie has encouraged members to participate actively in union activities, helping to foster a new generation of activists and ensuring the ongoing health and vitality of both her branch and the Counties Manukau region.”

**PPTA Te Wehengarua established the Guy Allan award in 2005 to recognise outstanding branch activism in the Counties-Manukau and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland regions. The award commemorates the late Guy Allan – a former PPTA branch chair and an Auckland-based field officer who was renowned for his commitment to unionism and branch activism.*

A day to pause and reflect

PPTA Te Wehengarua made its presence felt again at Waitangi this year to honour the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Being at Waitangi for Waitangi Day – the most significant event on the Māori calendar - this year was very special for Riripēti Wilson.

Riripēti, who teaches at Hastings Boys' High School and is PPTA Hawke's Bay Te-Reo-ā-Rohe member, was part of an official contingent representing PPTA Te Wehengarua at the treaty grounds.

Immersed in the kaupapa

"I felt very humbled and honoured to have been allowed to make the trip to fully appreciate our diverse cultures and the importance of us as a united and powerfully strong union being there to support, to honour, and to celebrate this day with the multitudes that were there."

She enjoyed being immersed in and surrounded by the kaupapa. "It was very new for me and the first time I have ever been to the actual place where historically this event occurred."

PPTA Te Wehengarua president, Chris Abercrombie, and general secretary, Kirsty Farrant, along with Te Huarahi and national executive members, Te-Reo-ā-Rohe members and staff interacted with visitors at the bright red PPTA marquee.

Riripēti says it was wonderful seeing PPTA Te Wehengarua merchandise all

over the treaty grounds – merchandise sported by people who visited the marquee and shared their memories of kaiako.

She said Waitangi Day at Waitangi was a day of community engagement. "To listen and learn and to have an appreciation of, and to celebrate, our history together.

To listen and learn and to have an appreciation of, and to celebrate, our history together.

"It is a day to pause, reflect, and connect with the past, present and future of Aotearoa."

Making stronger connections

She wanted to go to Waitangi also to build stronger connections with those in Te Huarahi and Te-Reo-ā-Rohe.

"I know who they are, but I don't know them well. This is important to me because I want to be able to support these people and to network with them to improve and develop my skills to give better support to them and their roles and the people in my rohe (area)."

Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie, PPTA Te Wehengarua Hāpai Ō (Māori vice president) says the benefits of PPTA Te Wehengarua being present at Waitangi are significant.

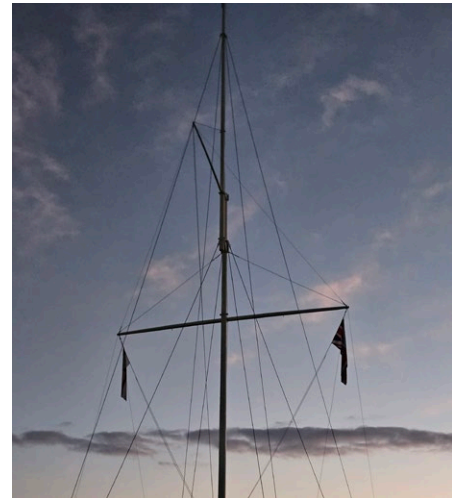
"The PPTA gazebo clearly signals the Association's commitment to affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi to the whole of Aotearoa. Holding a stall, talking to the public, giving away merchandise in support of Waitangi Day - the positive promotion of being at Waitangi cannot be over-estimated. The connection through kanohi kitea, laughter and kōrero is valuable."

Angela O'Donnell-King, PPTA Kaihautū Māori, said PPTA representatives staffed the stall and engaged the public like professionals. "The PPTA marquee was a stand-out for fun and laughter - the handing out of merchandise with much showmanship was a spectacle and enjoyable entertainment.

"Our Amorangi / President, Chris Abercrombie, was a drawcard for many who recognised him as the face of PPTA Te Wehengarua. Ko Chris Te Amorangi ko te hāpai-ō ki muri."

She said a strong sense of solidarity was shared with other unionists who gathered to support and commemorate Waitangi.





No interest in charter school conversions

State schools are showing a distinct lack of interest in converting to charter schools

We begin the 2026 school year with 17 charter schools approved. Eight opened in 2025, with the remaining set to open either at the start of 2026 or at some point this year.

Despite Associate Education Minister David Seymour's insistence that our schools were baying for independence from the tyranny of the Ministry of Education, not a single public school has yet converted.

Desperate measures

The Charter School Agency states on its website it is working with a small number of schools who have expressed interest in converting to become charter schools. We know that the Charter Schools Agency has been out-and-about, desperate to convince public schools to convert – and late in 2025 we saw the introduction of the Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill which provides a pathway for charter schools to convert back to public schools. Clearly our public schools have cold feet about privatisation. There are a number of reasons that schools are choosing not to convert, including concerns about being set adrift, worries about ongoing property costs and, for some, a steadfast belief in public education.

We have both anecdotal and actual evidence that former charter schools are not interested in returning to the model. At least one former charter school has signed a PPTA branch resolution and (at the time of writing) none have converted back.

The impact on the schooling network is still unknown – numbers in these charter schools are still thought to be fairly low. As of the end of 2025, there were 427 students enrolled across eight schools. This will increase as more schools open, but it is still not at a level that will make a dent in the level of unmet need in our system.

PPTA policy, confirmed at our 2023 Annual Conference, is to reject the further privatisation of our education system and use the state school provisions for 'designated character' to



develop and support innovative models. Ultimately, we know that the 'innovation' charter schools are offering is possible within a public system and could be offered around the country as hubs or academies in current school sites.

We have excellent examples of innovation within the public system; this is not something that is exclusive to a private model.

Forced conversions

Late last year, a very public battle was held between Kelston Boys' High School and a trust that was attempting to take over the school and convert it to a charter.

We saw the whole school, including the branch and school leadership and the board, working together to push back on the false narratives being spread through the community.

While it was incredibly stressful for all involved, we could take some heart from the clear message being sent – from the comments in both the mainstream media and on social media – that the community and the public at large were not interested in the forced conversion of a local school.

The Charter School Agency has said "there is nothing to stop a repeat of the situation" in future, and so this is something that many more schools may face in the future. It is also possible that in the future, there may be more community support for such

a takeover, which leaves staff and students vulnerable.

How can we prevent this from happening again?

1. Sign the Branch Resolution! You can access the resources on the PPTA website. Get in touch with your Field Officer if you would like assistance in this process. We will be updating our website regularly, so keep checking in and keep an eye on the Collective News for information.
2. Get involved in your region. Your regional committee meets at least once a term. Our collective strength is valuable.
3. Attend PPTA conferences – at this month's Issues and Organising Conference, for example, there was a workshop on our ongoing charter school resistance.
4. Sign up non-members to strengthen the branch.

Working in a charter school

If you know someone who is considering working in a charter school, they need to be a member if they wish to access PPTA assistance. Encourage them to join up if they have not already done so.

We have information sheets on the website about working in a charter school. ppta.org.nz → *campaigning* → *charter schools*



PLD fund locked and loaded

The popular Professional Learning and Development Fund is up and running for the next two years

PPTA Te Wehengarua members are encouraged to apply for Subject Association grants now that the Professional Learning and Development (PLD) fund has been signed and sealed by PPTA and the Ministry of Education.

“We’ve managed to sign our funding agreement with the Ministry in a very timely manner which means we are able to start the year being able to offer Subject Association grants right now,” says Angela Roberts, PPTA’s Kaiwhakahaere / PLD Co-ordinator.

Get pre-approval asap

“We’re very aware that schools are making plans for what PLD they want to support their staff to go and do, so knowing they’ve got access to this is great. It’s for the full two years. I would encourage everyone to get their pre-approval sorted as soon as possible so they can get the grant locked in.”

The same criteria apply as previously – you must be a PPTA Te Wehengarua member, the event must be an approved Subject Association event, and you can claim the grant for one event per year.

The grant covers expenses such as travel, accommodation, childcare, mileage and food. The amount has gone up – now up to \$850 worth of expenses will be reimbursed. Check out the PPTA website for more information and an application form: ppta.org.nz → **PLD fund** → **grant** to attend subject association conferences

PCT Conference July 13-14

Angela says the Provisionally Certificated Teachers’ (PCT) Conference has also been locked in. It will be held in Christchurch on 13-14 July 2026, just after the Māori Teachers’ Conference and just before Pasifika Fono.

“The PCT Conference has proven time and time again to be such a valued experience. The vox pops that conference participants featured in last year showed that they not only appreciated the professional development, but they also realised they were a part of a professional and union community.”



The conference provides participants with a fantastic opportunity to connect with their professional colleagues across the country and find other people who are having similar experiences to them.

Courses and events hit the mark and are what people need and want

“The evidence is clear, we know that if we look after our people who are new to the profession or new to New Zealand, then they’re more likely to find the resilience they need when things get tough, because they know that we value them and they are one of us.”

The PCT conference is fully funded – travel, accommodation, and registration are all paid for.

Registrations for the PCT Conference were expected to open in early March. Check out the events page on the PPTA website.

Micro-credential courses under consideration

Angela says she is continuing to look at supporting the micro-credential courses that are being run by Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington.

“One of the best things about the PLD fund is that, because decisions about what the fund offers and covers are driven by PPTA members, courses and events hit the mark and are what people need and want.”

If you have any suggestions about what you would like the PLD fund to cover or offer, Angela would love to hear from you. Email pld@ppta.org.nz



Vale Graeme Macann

Jen McCutcheon, PPTA president in the early 2000s, pays tribute to her senior vice president, Graeme Macann, who died last December

I was a fellow PPTA executive member with Graeme and became his junior vice-president when he ran successfully for president in 1999. Later, when I became president, he supported me as senior vice-president.

In 2003, at the PPTA Executive farewell for Graeme, I described his support, because I'm a country girl, as being like a strainer post – that sturdy piece of timber that keeps the fence strong and taut. And that was Graeme's role in PPTA and in everything else he did.

Graeme joined PPTA back in 1969 as a student at Christchurch Teachers College. He was branch chairperson at Okaihau College from 1985 and regional secretary, later chairperson, for Upper Northland between 1992-94. He was first elected to executive in 1995, later chairing the curriculum advisory committee and the board of studies. He also chaired the management committee before becoming president and then senior vice-president.

Tumultuous times

In the late 1990s, the Association was in turmoil with a president who had seemingly become drunk on the power of office and no longer appeared to wish to be bound by majority decisions. Executive and the membership were split, both about the president and the looming change in student qualifications which became the NCEA.

As an English teacher, Graeme was steeped in curriculum issues. He was chair of the PPTA curriculum committee and shepherded the development of standards-based assessment. This put him on a collision course with the president who seemed to be cynically using membership unease about NCEA to build his own power base.

After a curriculum conference, where members endorsed development of the NCEA while witnessing the seemingly increasingly erratic behaviour of the president, it became clear that it would be necessary to sack him – something not contemplated in the PPTA constitution



Graeme Macann

and certainly not something we members of executive wanted to grapple with.

Calm and reason

It was a time of high tension. Graeme worked with others on Executive to see through the difficult and painful process of removing one president and installing another as caretaker until elections could be held. Graeme was elected president and I as vice president.

Once he and I had been elected, we inherited the task of rebuilding an organisation bruised and scarred by the political infighting of the previous years. Graeme's calm, reasonable and discreet approach meant he was able to draw members together – and they needed to be together because the 10-year fight against bulk-funding was at a critical point.

He used the same skills to build bridges with individuals and government agencies who had been alienated by the unpredictable behaviour of the previous regime.

NCEA remained a divisive issue amongst teachers. Graeme, ever thoughtful and

analytical, described the Ministry's implementation of NCEA as 'hand to mouth and naïve' and 'of little use' as we approached the hard part of putting the NCEA in place within a somewhat browbeaten workforce who had not much enthusiasm for it. Some things never change.

Boiling point

Members' frustration with NCEA, the workload it was driving and poor pay boiled over in 2002 when I was president and Graeme was senior vice-president. The sector was embroiled in industrial disputes – it was mayhem. Some of the anger was directed at executive and I much appreciated Graeme's support, clear thinking and wisdom through that difficult period.

Soon after, Graeme was appointed principal at Rosehill College. He continued to support PPTA and to advance a professional agenda as PPTA representative on the Teachers' Council and as chair of the Secondary Principals' Council.

Those of us who worked with Graeme saw first-hand his commitment to serving others – family, students, teachers and the wider community – without fear or favour. He always strove to be an ethical professional and encouraged others to tread the same path.

Graeme led from the front industrially but his real legacy was his commitment to enhancing the union's professional role; to, in his own words, 'nurture its capacity to provide professional leadership ... (and) to provide intellectual challenge and uplift'.

Thank you Graeme.

Haere, haere haere atu rā.

Kua whetūrangitia koe.

Enabling school workers to live with dignity

Let's make 2026 the year that all schools pledge to support the living wage for our cleaners, caretakers, canteen staff, and grounds keepers

Congratulations to St Patrick's College, Wellington, Hagley College, Hornby High School, Tawa College and St Catherine's College whose boards pledged recently to support the living wage for schools.

The living wage schools campaign aims to have central government provide funding to schools to ensure they can pay the living wage to both their directly employed and contracted cleaners, caretakers, canteen staff, and grounds keepers (CCCG).

Cleaners arrive after all students and teachers have finished for the day. They remove dirt, grime, and rubbish, transforming classrooms and school spaces back into sleek and functional learning environments.

Caretakers are Jacks and Jills of all trades. They undertake an extensive array of tasks to keep school facilities safe and secure, benefiting not only students but also teachers and parents.

Canteen staff supply the nation's children with the nutrition they need to tackle a day of learning. Food and nutrition are a key component of a young person's development and their ability to succeed.

Groundskeepers ensure that school sports and activities are able to take place, bringing joy not only to the students but also to the community at large, who gather on weekends to watch their kids participate.

Paying these staff a living wage would increase the pay of an individual worker by an average of \$180 per fortnight. For a family consisting of two adults and two children on one and a half incomes, their total income would increase by \$270 per fortnight. This would provide essential funds to cover basic necessities and enable them to live with dignity.

The campaign also strives to make the living wage the baseline for schools across Aotearoa New Zealand, just as it is in hospitals and the core state sector.

Schools are not expected to bear the financial burden. They are simply asked to sign a pledge endorsing the campaign and supporting the allocation of new living wage-specific operational funding.

The cost of paying school CCCG workers the living wage is estimated to be insignificant compared to the education budget and the amount allocated to

operational funding. It is most likely a matter of reallocating existing funding, rather than imposing additional financial obligations on the Ministry of Education.



How your school can support Living Wage Schools

Present the living wage pledge as a motion during a school board meeting and then formally adopt it as a resolution.

A board representative and the principal then sign your pledge, either in paper form or online. Take a photo of school board and staff representatives

alongside the 'Living Wage Schools' banner or the printable 'Support Living Wage Schools' sign.

Make a written statement about why you signed on.

Send the pledge, along with photos and statement, back to the individual(s) who engaged with the board.

It pays to know

It's important to know your rights and collective agreement provisions when it comes to salary increments

One step up the pay scale for every year or every 1000 hours

Teachers joining the profession will start on a pay rate somewhere on the base salary scale depending on their qualifications and credits for things like work experience. Teachers will progress up the pay scale until reaching the maximum pay rate for their qualification type.

Permanent full-time and part-time teachers should move up one step after each full year (the date you are due to move is called your increment date).

Non-permanent part-time teachers are different. They move one step up the scale after every 1000 hours of timetabled employment. As they are employed for fewer than 1000 hours a year these teachers will take more than one year to move each step up the scale and, as a precaution, should keep their own record of how many hours they are accumulating.

The employer must attest the teacher has met professional standards

In all cases the employer must attest the teacher has met the appropriate professional standards which are listed in Supplement 1 of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (STCA), and Schedule 1 of the Area School Teachers'

Collective Agreement (ASTCA). The principal must send the attestation form to the Education Payroll Service Centre (EdPay) to confirm the increment is due.

Sometimes the employer sends the notification too late for the increase to be paid out on time. While annoying for the teacher, this is easily remedied - the notification is sent and the salary increase is backdated to when it was actually due.

Salary increments can be withheld only where the employer has properly determined that the teacher's performance is not satisfactory.

The real problem arises when the employer won't attest the teacher's performance is satisfactory and tries to withhold the increment. Any PPTA member who finds themselves in this situation should immediately contact their field officer.

A good- faith process must be followed

Salary increments can be withheld only where the employer has properly

determined that the teacher's performance is not satisfactory. This must follow a good-faith process and be consistent with the collective agreement provisions around teacher performance.

Under both the STCA and ASTCA, these provisions include that you get reasonable opportunities for appropriate and effective professional development and that if the employer has any concerns about a teacher's performance, then the teacher must be told. An employer is not allowed to withhold a salary increment without reasonable prior warning.

Withholding increments is rare

Withholding of increments is rare, mainly due to the very high quality of New Zealand secondary teachers. When it does occur, the identified problems are usually solved within one or two school terms.

The employer must put in place a specific programme of support and development to assist the teacher in meeting the required standards. Once the standards are met, the teacher receives the salary increment from that date, and this will then become their new increment date for future moves up the salary scale.



Learning for ‘amazing’

A transdisciplinary learning project involving students and teachers from four Wellington high schools is proving to be amazing, writes Dr James Richardson

“I am amazing” is the mantra we espouse at the Wellington ThinkTank project - a partnership between Rongotai College, Scots College, Wellington East Girls’ College and St. Patrick’s College Kilbirnie. The affirmation is a mix of realisation and choice, and perhaps overly ambitious. But at the heart of it, aren’t we all amazing at something?

ThinkTank is an opportunity for able and ambitious students to explore topics on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) learning, theories of knowledge, computational thinking, ethics and philosophy in a way that pops the traditional bubbles that our schools sometimes create. It has seen students and teachers stepping up, and out and working together in ways they would not normally have done so.

How we engage is key

The pedagogical shifts included: transdisciplinary learning rather than siloed thinking, iterative and cyclic problem solving instead of getting to the solution as quickly as possible, using disruptive technologies for good and to enhance “real” relationships not just replacing people with tech, inclusive problem solving with people you don’t agree with instead of surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals, and being a catalyst for change rather than an ingredient!

But what sets the stage for such success? I noticed that when answering questions like “What is justice?”, “Is beauty objective or subjective?”, “What should we do about climate change?”, I realised that the questions we asked were not as important as the way in which we engaged with them.

I noticed our students approached these intentionally abstract questions first with initiative, that is, they had an opinion and weren’t afraid to share it. Secondly, they supported their opinion with knowledge or ideas they had accumulated in their lives through hard work. And lastly, they engaged the discussion with empathy and flexibility, which is to say: they were



ThinkTank participants model homeless shelter design

open to suggestions and were not fixed in their own position.

Amazing feedback

And what are some of the benefits of ThinkTank or qualities of able and ambitious learners? I asked some of the lead teachers and students, and this is what they had to say:

“Ambitious learners have the desire to learn, and able learners have the specialisation and ability to learn. As teachers we need to consider how we provide these opportunities to extend thinking - Think Tank has been a wonderful collaboration of four schools to do just that.” - Ms. Amanda Hood, St. Patrick’s College

“I loved making new friends with different students and the topics we learnt about were very interesting.” - Charlie, Year 10, Wellington East Girls’ College

“Students who signed up were curious, brave, creative and excited to tackle something more complex; to address problems that don’t have one straight-forward answer; where utilising each other’s talents and abilities across different disciplines through collaboration was essential to unravelling the issue and proposing possible ways to solve the problems.” - Ms. Georgette Lampitt, Wellington East Girls’ College

“ThinkTank was very useful because I felt challenged with the tasks and it made me

try harder than usual, and it encouraged me to socialise with people I don’t normally hang out with.” - Charlie, Year 9, Rongotai College

Amazing needs both ability and ambition

I think the ingredients of natural abilities and an ambitious attitude are some of the factors in a multiplicative model rather than an additive model. “Amazing” needs both qualities to manifest.

It doesn’t take deep pockets or extra tutoring or endless training to make “amazing”. Nor does it drain resources from those involved. If we consider knowledge as a cup of water we bring to a party to share, for instance, “good” learning involves sharing some of this knowledge in a critical way with others.

But unlike water, “pouring” knowledge into another’s cup does not in any way diminish one’s own supply. And indeed, both the quantity and quality of knowledge increases when it is shared in a good way.

Ultimately, “great” learning leads to an accumulation and development of skills, knowledge and attitudes that is greater than the sum of its parts. To that end, fill your cup, and share it around to find your amazing, too.

**James Richardson teaches Science with Physics at Rongotai College*

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'.

