

PPTA News

Uniting secondary teachers of Aotearoa



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PPTA News

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Keeping our eye on the prize

In times like these, it helps to remember why we chose to be teachers, writes Chris Abercrombie



When my six-year-old daughter was in hospital earlier this year, one of my former students was the nurse who admitted her and looked after her. It was a lovely surprise to see her and find out what she was up to. It took me right back to the time when I taught her and memories flooded back of other students in that cohort.

This random encounter led to many thoughts over the following days about other students, how they had made me laugh, how proud I had been of their progress, how one or two had risen to some pretty daunting challenges, and how a couple had provided me with the greatest source of satisfaction when they starting turning up for class more regularly. It got me thinking about so many rangatahi and wondering where their lives had taken them.

I've been teaching for about 20 years, which means that I've touched the lives of at least 3000 young people in my career so far. Some of them will be in their mid to late 30s, many of whom will probably have their own children by now. While I probably predicted pretty accurately years ago where some students would be now, I suspect that I would be totally gobsmacked by what some others have gone on to do.

I'm aware that often – and for good reason – this column is not the most uplifting. My role, as your industrial and professional representative, is not to sugar coat but to tell it like it is – particularly to the education decision and policy makers. And often what I have to say is pretty grim because times are tough for teachers; the pace of change is relentless, the quality of the change is questionable, and unmet student need is increasing dramatically.

I'm able to tell it like it is because I have the very great privilege of visiting so many kura around the motu – large and small, rich and poor alike. It is such an honour to visit branches and listen to members talk about your work and the challenges you are facing.

I know that often you are too busy to reflect on this, but I am sure you will agree that teaching itself is a privilege in many ways. What other career provides the opportunity to shape futures in the way that ours does?

As secondary teachers we meet rangatahi at a critical time in their lives when identity, ambition, and independence are beginning to take shape. In these years, we help our ākonga move beyond learning “what” to learning “why” and “how” – how to persist, how to collaborate, how to think critically and deeply, how to be their authentic selves and how to imagine a life beyond school.

What other career provides the opportunity to shape futures in the way that ours does?

Every day we notice students' strengths – spatial reasoning, leadership, empathy, curiosity – and we often suggest next steps that can change a life: taking an extended Maths course, joining the debating team, applying for a scholarship, or trying a trades taster course. A single conversation about subject choice or a carefully written reference can open doors, especially for young people who do not have access to professional networks through whānau or friends.

Chances are that we will never know what difference our suggestions or advice made to most of the students we have taught. However, when we do – in an email, a DM, or a random encounter in the street – life doesn't get better. It truly makes my heart sing when I hear that I've made a difference.

I know there is a lot that does not feel fantastic about teaching at the moment – it is difficult to believe our work is valued and appreciated when it feels like the rug is being pulled out from underneath us constantly and we are actively excluded from curriculum and assessment change processes.

Now, more than ever, it's imperative for us to keep focused on what inspired us to become teachers. We have the most amazing job in the world, we have the privilege of working with rangatahi during one of the most critical stages of their lives – and they never cease to inspire, amuse, frustrate and surprise us.

We are here for our ākonga – and their futures.

Kia kaha.



Thinking against your instincts

It's time for teachers to test the limits of some of their educational truths for the sake of educational equity and social justice

All teachers should be believers and doubters in education, says Auckland University education lecturer Dr Claudia Rozas.

Claudia was a keynote speaker at both PPTA Te Wehengarua's issues and organising seminar and subject associations forum held earlier this year.

She said the pace of educational change and some of the 'dodgy' processes for making change under the current Government had been so shocking that the impulse of the sector was to defend the status quo.

Status quo not the solution

Even though she did not endorse what the Government was doing, this did not mean the status quo was how things needed to stay. "I think we've come to a moment because it's been decades since I was a first year teacher, yet we're encountering the same issues, the same problems particularly around closing those equity gaps.

"I think a lot of the things that we think are good and true are good and true, but we need to test the limits, particularly with regard to educational equity and social justice in education."

She encouraged teachers to think against their educational progressive instincts. "Because there are aspects of what we think are good and true that feel progressive but in fact are embedded in a broader neo-liberal economic discourse that privileges particular things that actually work against the democratic basis of public education."

It was important to hold that tension – being able to doubt some things while still sustaining a deep belief in education.

Challenge required

"I describe myself increasingly as a believer and a doubter and I'm going to suggest that we should all be believers and doubters in education because as time has gone on there are some truths and orthodoxies that I think quite possibly require a challenge."



Dr Claudia Rozas

She was increasingly uncomfortable with the idea, being promoted generally by educators opposed to the policies of the current Government, that some groups of students cannot do certain things, such as literacy and numeracy assessments.

We need to test the limits particularly with regard to educational equity and social justice in education

"Literacy and numeracy for Māori and Pasifika, for neurodivergent students, for students from poorer backgrounds, these things do matter. It's not a binary exclusion. If we start saying that's a deficit view, that some groups of students can't do this, we're measuring the wrong things.

"Literacy and numeracy, reading and writing, they deeply matter and they matter in terms of education equity and social justice. To turn our nose up and be a little bit cavalier about these things is an idea that really needs to be challenged."

Reasons for success

Another notion that needed to be challenged was the idea that a successful student of colour is an assimilated student of colour. "If a Māori student is doing well in school, then they must obviously be assimilated and colonised. I think that's an idea that needs to be challenged because maybe that's a student who's really smart and who, despite the fact that the system doesn't work in their favour, has actually done really well.

"Maybe behind that there is an incredibly experienced teacher who knows something about teaching and learning and the subject area and they have contributed to that success."

Also in need of challenge was the idea that only race conscious policies would address inequities in education. "We need to have a multi-faceted analysis, and I think you need analysis before you have a vision. Before you figure out what the answer is, analysis is required first. What are the variables that are contributing to these particular outcomes in education?"

She encouraged teachers to remain committed to the idea that knowledge matters, even though they could reject the version of knowledge-rich curriculum being promoted by the Government. The 2007 curriculum that was competency and outcomes-based marginalised and minimised the importance of knowledge.

Claudia said some level of standardisation or common curriculum was stronger than a fully localised curriculum. "I think there are aspects of curriculum that should be localised and contextual but that there is value, particularly for the democratic impulses of a common curriculum, in the idea that there is something that everyone has access to."

There was a need for debate and discussion around which aspects of the curriculum would be common and which would be standardised, and what is fit for purpose in the context of a bi-cultural country such as Aotearoa New Zealand.

Polyfest – a place where young people can shine

PPTA Te Wehengarua was proud to be an official sponsor of and stall holder at Polyfest 2026

When PPTA Te Wehengarua was approached by members in PPTA's Pasifika network to be an official sponsor of the Cook Island Stage, we jumped at the chance to support students and teachers.

The annual celebration of Pasifika culture and diversity is hugely important to the young people who are performing, their whānau and entire school communities.

The festival features traditional music, dance, costume and cultural speech competitions, and is one of the most recognised events on the Auckland calendar. It's a showcase of New Zealand's diverse cultures and a celebration of youth performance.

Students traditionally compete on six stages, performing traditional items from the following cultures – Cook Islands, Māori, Niue, Samoa, Tonga and Diversity stage featuring performances from a range of cultural groups including Fijian, Tokelau, Chinese, Korean and Indian.

The festival is an opportunity for students to be immersed deeply into their culture. Many of our Pasifika rangatahi are lucky enough to be connected deeply with their culture, but many are not. It is also a place where young people can shine, taking strength from their cultural roots in creative expression.

For teachers, it is an opportunity to connect with students in a different way. Seeing students working towards their performances and achieving their goals is so special and is what keeps many teachers in education.





Desperate need for schools to catch up with technological advances

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence may result in the most significant disruption to education in a generation, warn technology subject specialists

A Q & A with Andrew Churches, president of Digital Technologies Teachers Aotearoa (DTTA) and Shane Fairhall, DTTA executive member.

Q: What are your key concerns about AI in schools?

A: AI is a critical tool that will, like the advent of the personal computer, the internet, and Wikipedia, shape education and employment. The rapid rate of evolution means that our usual game of catch up with technological advances has shifted from being chronic to acute. This acuity means the disruption to education may be the most significant we have seen in a generation.

It is a time for open conversation. We are going to face challenges as educators with authenticity of assessment and information, reliance and fundamental understanding. Our ākonga are going to face similar challenges as well as the challenges of its impact on their social structures, cognitive capacity (cognitive off load and overload) and often misguided faith in accuracy.

The classic ostrich approach of the head in the sand sadly taken by some regarding AI will see those schools unable to support our ākonga in recognising and understanding the challenges and opportunities that AI presents.

Q: The Minister of Education seems to be in favour of AI being used increasingly to assess students' work - what concerns do you have with this?

A: There are two levels to this question. The first is the organisational level, which has resources and capacity to manage accuracy and authenticity, and then the individual level which has more serious concerns.

On the organisational level, the approach taken by NZQA in its use of machine marking with a large human input and human at risk markings - work that does not fit within the perimeters of the expected responses and those on the



Andrew Churches

border between grade boundaries - is considered and cautious. The potential for consistency across the entire education sector at key points is positive, as is consistent constructive feedback. Data derived from this can be used to inform next steps and identify individuals in need of support and the like.

On an individual basis, there are considerable issues with intellectual property and copyright that are addressed at organisational level but potentially leave the individual teacher at risk. The data sets that individual teachers can access are often limited and can be biased as it's often the opinion of the teacher that is providing the criteria for assessment, and this can lead to inaccurate and flawed decision making.

For the individual teacher, there are the trade-offs between accuracy and authenticity - If the data set is inaccurate then the decisions will be flawed. If the individual teacher relies solely on the AI output, then the feedback provided may be generic and inauthentic. Depending on the tool being used there are considerable privacy risks.

In a large organisation with suitable resourcing, like NZQA, the data can be protected in a walled garden. Teachers do not have that luxury and may well be inadvertently breaching privacy by using, with the best of intent, public models.

Further, there are particular forms of assessment outcomes that are more



Shane Fairhall

easily marked by AI than others. For example, an AI tool might be able to make accurate judgments about short answers to specific questions in a test but may be less able to make judgements about the level of design thinking shown in a visual portfolio.

If it becomes easier to mark using AI, there may be a risk that the tools we use for marking might drive decisions we make about the forms of assessment we set for students - forms that may not always be best for the context.

Q: Can you give some common examples of how teachers are using AI?

A: The uptake of AI across the motu is very mixed and at times quite polarised. Some are avoiding any use of artificial intelligence while others are embracing it with open arms. Some examples would include:

- Using products like Notebook LM (a Google tool) to upload documents and then have the product answer questions, provide summaries and present these as a podcast or notes
- Using embedded tools within both the Apple and Microsoft environments to provide summaries of documents - improving efficiency
- Using language models to adjust the reading level of texts for students

- Using language models to develop text and often media-based outputs from questions or prompts, for example, 'create a slide deck about...', or 'create an activity sheet that does...'.

The most frequent use is often as a search engine, where the prompts are entered and refined to provide an acceptable output. However, this is often fraught with an inability to see the sources and a lack of understanding of the mechanics of language models i.e. it is probability based.

Q: Is the fact that teachers and schools are doing their own thing a concern for you?

A: This is to be expected as the Ministry of Education and NZQA have instructed schools to develop and socialise their own AI policies for use within their kura. Guidance from the Ministry has been fairly light and mostly relates to assessment. Some organisations like Te Whakaroputanga (NZ School Boards Association) are providing support at board, management and teacher level for AI. DTTA has also provided support and guidance.

The evolution of AI is so rapid that it is very hard for any organisation, government or non-government organisation, to keep pace with the latest trends, features, functions and pitfalls.

Q: What are some of the key benefits of AI for student learning?

A: Future readiness is a key point - we see the use of AI across all aspects of employment and leisure, so preparing our students is critical.

AI enables students to have quick and efficient access to some of the mundane tasks they may need to do - for example as a digital technology teacher I need students to have content to publish for developing products like websites, for example, the actual text that sits on the webpages students will code, databases, etc. This is not assessed but is required as it gives context to the product. Using AI to

develop this reduces the requirement and workload for the students.

AI enables students to take text and content that they may be struggling with and transform it into a more accessible form.

AI provides a starting point for research, particularly tools like Perplexity that provide extensive bibliographies of resources used.

Q: What are some of the key risks?

A: The key risks are well known - bias, hallucination, plagiarism, deep fakes, AI cyberbullying, academic dishonesty and the like.

Less well considered risks include cognitive off-load, impact on learning, social detachment and isolation, particularly when students are using AI as a social connection, the impact on critical thinking, dependence as a reduction of independent ability to learn, think, create and imagine. A report produced by the Brookings Institution also points to eroded trust in relationships between students and teachers as a key risk.

www.brookings.edu.au → education → education technology → a new direction for students in an ai world prosper prepare protect

Q: How can these risks be mitigated or managed by teachers and students?

A: While an initial response might be to heavily restrict access to AI tools, that may not be the best approach. Like we have seen with the advent of other technologies, reducing student agency by banning access will often have the effect of driving use into the shadows where students can't be supported to understand the strengths and limitations, benefits and risks of the tools. Young people need to be aware of what these risks are and should be involved in conversations about schools' approaches to AI use.

The Brookings report linked above provides some advice about how to best

manage some of the risks of GenAI in an education setting; things like promoting AI literacy with teachers, students and families, and preparing teachers to teach with and through AI. However, many of the recommendations are geared towards interventions at regulatory or system level, and perhaps that is where more of the responsibility for managing these risks should lie.

What teachers need is clear, researched-informed guidance about the ways that AI can be meaningfully integrated into teaching programs in a way that is educationally-sound and enhances, not diminishes learning opportunities, and the tools that will support them to do so. It would be useful if this guidance and any associated resources were developed centrally to ensure consistency and rigour and to avoid duplication of work. This is not to say educators and students should not be involved in the process, but rather that having a single point of coordination is probably best.

Resources for teachers and students are available at the DTTA website - dtta.org.nz/en/resources/

Q: What support do you think teachers and schools need from the Government?

A: The Ministry of Education and NZQA have both offered guidance regarding the use of artificial intelligence in schools, assessment and learning. The materials are useful, but they take time to develop and distribute and are relatively light touch. While they are accessible, they could be more timely. Guidance from the Ministry could be stronger - it would be useful to see the Ministry publish strong guidance that draws on research about GenAI uses that are appropriate and inappropriate for learning, as well as a further set of exemplar use-cases that help guide schools and teachers about how to make the best and most appropriate use of the tools. There are two use cases on the Ministry's GenAI page, one from Aotea College and the second from Hobsonville Point Secondary School.



Fight for pay equity goes to UN

Aotearoa New Zealand pay equity advocates have lodged a complaint with the United Nations about the Government's changes to pay equity laws

It was one year ago on 6 May 2026 since the gutting of the pay equity laws that put an end to the teachers' pay equity claim and to 32 other claims of workers in female-dominated occupations.

A year on, the fight to have these claims restored and the changes to the legislation rescinded has been taken to the global stage. The Pay Equity Coalition Aotearoa (PECA), a group of 20 organisations including PPTA, is taking a formal complaint to the United Nations (UN). The complaint asks the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to investigate whether the Government's changes to New Zealand's pay equity laws amount to systemic discrimination against women.

PPTA Te Wehengarua Executive member, Clare Preston, is one of four women workers who are named in the complaint as victims of the changes to pay equity legislation.

Clare, who teaches social sciences at Wellington High School, has been involved with the teachers' pay equity claim for many years. She took part in the interview process that sought to evaluate the true scope and range of skills and responsibilities possessed by teachers. When the pay equity changes locked secondary teachers out of a pay equity claim, she turned her efforts to the repeal of the legislation, and the restoration of the teachers' pay equity claim.

Speaking at an event to mark the first anniversary of the pay equity changes and to announce the UN complaint, Clare said the assault on the Equal Pay Act of 1972 was utterly deplorable. "It rendered the intent of the Equal Pay Act null and void as these changes prevent the closing of the gender pay gap.

"It is working people who hold the mana of making this country function, and the story of equal pay for work of equal value for us wāhine is not finished", she said.

Clare is joined by Early Childhood Education teacher Mel Burgess, teacher



PPTA executive member Clare Preston speaks at the pay equity event



PECA spokesperson Dame Judy McGregor addresses the audience

aide Ally Kingi, and support worker Tamara Baddelley, as the women named in the UN complaint.

Dame Judy McGregor, former Equal Opportunities Commissioner and PECA spokesperson, says lodging the complaint elevates this matter to a global stage. "This is no longer just a domestic policy debate. It raises serious questions about whether the law now enables state-sponsored discrimination against women, and what that means for New Zealand's commitment to fairness and human rights."

The UN complaint comes after the People's Select Committee on Pay Equity found that the process by which pay equity was dismantled in New Zealand was a "flagrant and significant abuse of power" and a significant breach of human rights.

The United Nations will now assess whether the complaint is admissible. If the complaint is accepted, it will be sent to the New Zealand Government for a response. The CEDAW Committee will consider the case and provide its views and recommendations.



Time is right for Tirotiro Anō

Looking again with fresh eyes is exactly what is needed as once in a generation changes are made to the secondary school qualifications and assessment systems, says Melissa Denzler

A panel that PPTA Te Wehengarua has commissioned to monitor and review the replacement of NCEA creates space to examine what the system is for, who it serves and whose knowledge and aspirations are centred, says Melissa Denzler, co-chair of the Tirotiro Anō panel.

The expert panel, comprising 11 educators, aims to ensure that decisions about the changes are informed, inclusive, and grounded in a deep understanding of education.

Melissa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Te Rarawa), Kairangaha Māori Māori researcher at the NZ Council of Educational Research, worked for more than 25 years in English-medium secondary schools in various roles across different contexts. She began teaching when School Certificate was the central qualification and she has worked through every major reform since then.

She says she agreed to co-chair the panel to acknowledge the importance of Māori representation and take up the opportunity to contribute to a collective where diverse voices are valued and the realities of the sector are central.

"It's also about contributing to a project that has significance to those working within the sector and alongside it.

"Tirotiro Anō means to look again with fresh eyes, and I think that is exactly what this moment calls for. We need to look again at what we value, what we protect, what we are prepared to change, and what we cannot lose. Because we have a responsibility to the mokopuna who will inherit the system we are designing today."

Te Tiriti analysis

One of the panel's lines of inquiry is a Te Tiriti analysis of the changes. For Melissa, applying Te Tiriti principles to students and assessment means ensuring the system works well for all learners, while also meeting the specific obligations to Māori as tangata whenua.

"Te Tiriti is not separate from the needs or interests of learners. It sets the



Melissa Denzler

standards for what a fair and just system looks like.

"For students, this means assessment that allows multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and learning and affirms their identities. For Māori, it also means having a genuine role in shaping what counts as success and how it is assessed."

We have a responsibility to the mokopuna who will inherit the system we are designing today

In practice it means designing assessments that are fair, inclusive, and responsive, while also ensuring that Māori knowledge, language, identity, and aspirations are protected, and able to shape the system itself.

"This also means recognising that assessment is not neutral. What we choose to assess, how we assess it, and whose knowledge we value all send powerful messages about what 'matters.'"

Whose knowledge counts?

Melissa says a major risk of such fundamental change is moving too

quickly into structural change without first doing the relational work. "Reform needs trust, evidence, dialogue, and engagement with those who will live with the consequences.

"Another risk is that we change the shape of the qualification but leave deeper power relations untouched. Linda and Graham Smith (Māori education academics) remind us that educational transformation requires us to question whose knowledge counts, who holds authority, and whether reform actually shifts conditions for Māori. Without that, reform may look new, but it simply reproduces the same inequities."

The expert panel began its work in March. As well as the Te Tiriti analysis mentioned above, other areas the panel is focusing on include an extension of school case studies, from the original 1997 Te Tiro Hou report after NCEA was introduced, vocational pathways and qualifications, curriculum flexibility, student engagement, and criteria for the development of standards used in school qualifications.

Phased approach

The panel was originally due to present its final report to PPTA Te Wehengarua annual conference in early October. However, the long time it is taking for the Government to release any real details about the changes means that the panel's work may be completed in two phases.

The first phase would consist of an analysis of what is currently known about the changes, what concerns emerge, what evidence is missing and what further work is required before sound decisions can be made. This work would be completed before Annual Conference.

The second phase depends on the availability of new information which would be analysed with findings and recommendations developed. This work would continue after Annual Conference.

You can find out more about the panel by visiting ppta.org.nz. Just search for Tirotiro Anō.



Know your employment rights

Schools are obliged legally to appoint teachers to permanent positions unless there are genuine reasons for not doing so

Hohepa was offered a job as a Maths teacher on a fixed term basis for one year. The stated reason for the position being fixed term was uncertainty about the school's roll.

Hohepa was disappointed as he wanted to buy his first home, but the bank would only approve a mortgage if he was permanently employed. As it happened, all ended well for Hohepa who was offered a permanent position at another school, which he accepted.

However, the predicament got Hohepa thinking and researching about fixed term employment and what it meant for him and others. Hohepa discovered that there is a legal obligation on schools to appoint teachers to permanent positions unless there are genuine reasons based on a limited number of reasonable grounds for the position to not be permanent. The roll uncertainty reason that Hohepa was given for the fixed term job was vague and he suspected probably spurious.

Financial uncertainty no basis for fixed term

Would the stated reason of roll uncertainty have met the legal requirement of being a genuine reason based on reasonable grounds? In seeking to answer this question, Hohepa discovered an Employment Court case called *Morgan v Transit Coachlines Wairarapa Limited* that is relevant to his situation.

Mr Morgan was a bus driver doing school runs. He was employed by Transit Coachlines on a fixed term basis year after year on the basis of uncertainty of ongoing Ministry of Education funding. Mr Morgan wanted to have his position made permanent. The Court found that Mr Morgan should be permanently employed. The Court said that the reasons Transit Coachlines had given Mr Morgan, around uncertainty of funding, was speculative and not grounds to make an employee fixed term.

Hohepa also read in the Morgan case that financial uncertainty of itself is not a reason for an employer making any position fixed term, otherwise virtually every job could lawfully be a fixed-term one, which was plainly not the intention of Parliament when it passed the legislation.

Need for greater explanation and scrutiny

PPTA Te Wehengarua field officers often see reasons being given for fixed term tenure such as uncertainty of student numbers and schools' dependency on external funding sources. The Morgan judgement reinforces the point that such reasons, if given, would require much greater explanation and scrutiny as in and of themselves these reasons would not meet the threshold for making an employee fixed term.

You can question fixed term positions

Teachers employed on a fixed term basis lack security in their employment. It can also have implications for teacher registration, and there are some provisions in the Collective Agreement that are not available to fixed term teachers, for example accessing maternity leave and study awards.

If you see fixed term advertisements in your school, you can ask, through your branch, why the position is fixed term. Contact your local field officer for support on how best to raise concerns.





Meet Mark Kelly

Raising the stakes in disputes is not Mark Kelly's style – unless it involves New Zealand's biggest dairy company dumping millions of litres of milk in his back yard

Resolving problems without any fuss is Mark Kelly's preferred style of working – but he has been at the centre of high profile disputes in the past.

Mark, a Dunedin-based field officer for PPTA Te Wehengarua, lived and taught in the United Kingdom before moving with his young family to Taranaki in 2003, where they bought a lifestyle block in 2013.

"I'd stopped teaching because I have a keen fondness for beer, so I was going to start a little brewery."

He immediately installed a 20,000-gallon water catchment system on the property, however within three to four weeks of the family moving there, Fonterra dumped about four million litres of buttermilk in a former wastewater pond nearby.

Decaying milk products release a heavy hydrogen sulphide gas, so anything on the property that was lower than three feet was saturated with it. "It killed all our chickens, one of our dogs died, our horses became unrideable, our house cow aborted, and my partner was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. That scuppered all our plans, and we basically abandoned the property in 2015."

Mark helped lead a high profile campaign against Fonterra and South Taranaki District Council. He and others appeared in the local newspaper regularly and were on the 'Campbell Live' television show a few times, raising public awareness of the situation.

"I did manage to get the Taranaki Regional Council to prosecute South Taranaki District Council and Fonterra for breaches of the Resources Management Act. The district council pleaded guilty, but Fonterra opted for a five-day trial in the Environment Court where it was found guilty.

"We don't have any corporate manslaughter type liability laws in New Zealand, so we (residents) never got anything from it."

Mark and his family moved to Dunedin – "about as far as we could get from



Caption: Mark Kelly

Taranaki" – where Mark enrolled in law school at Otago University.

"It was funny at university because I was old enough to be the students' dad and they used to look at me quizzically to start with, thinking, 'What's this all about with my dad sitting next to me, this isn't right'.

"But they were inquisitive and they asked why I was doing it and I explained why. I was dubbed at one point the Erin Brockovich (an American environmental activist who was instrumental in building a case against Pacific Gas & Electric Company involving groundwater contamination in Hinkley, California) of New Zealand, because my idea was to qualify as a lawyer and take Fonterra to court. Only snag is Fonterra have got incredibly deep pockets."

Mark went on to work for the Public Trust in Dunedin, assisting people with making wills, the legal process with probate and the distribution of assets.

He was also the PSA national delegate. "So, a lot of this work I do now at PPTA I was doing there. The only difference is that I get paid for it now."

Being field officer for South Otago and all of Southland requires a lot of driving but meeting people face to face is an important part of his work.

"It's about fostering a good relationship with people, and I think it's important for them to see who I am. It's all well and good to send emails about complaints but it's nice to know who you're sending them to, and you get a feel for how people are going to react."

Meeting people – who are in need of assistance – face to face gives them the opportunity to tell Mark exactly what's going on. "Then we can sort something out at a low level if we can. I don't like escalating things and sabre rattling – if you can sort it out without all that you can achieve a lot more."

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



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.

