

PPTA News

Uniting secondary teachers of Aotearoa



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musings**

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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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Standing together for public education

It's high stakes for the future of secondary education right now and our voice needs to be heard, writes Chris Abercrombie



Hui are a huge part of the PPTA Te Wehengarua calendar – particularly during the July term break. And this year was no exception.

It was fantastic to see so many familiar and new faces at Fono, Māori Teachers' Conference, the Subject Association Forum, and the Provisionally Certificated Teachers' Conference.

Making the time to go to conferences is a big ask, particularly when the school terms are relentlessly hectic, but they are so worth the effort. The range of speakers just gets more impressive each year; the workshops are amazing opportunities for learning and diving into the detail of an issue and the conference dinners never cease to entertain.

But what really makes all our hui zing are the participants and the coming together. And the common cause that we come together for – making secondary education better for our ākonga.

Our vision for the secondary teaching profession is all about making secondary education better through ensuring that teachers are well-paid and highly trained, teachers and school leaders are well supported in their role, we are a culturally responsive and sustaining profession, schools are properly resourced for pastoral care, curriculum and assessment, there is a sufficient and sustainable secondary teacher supply and there is a healthy work-life balance.

Our current collective agreement claims represent significant steps along the path towards that vision – we want reasonable pay increases, more pastoral

care allowances to address the increasing unmet needs of our ākonga and properly funded professional learning and development.

The Government seems to have other ideas that include, at the time of writing, offering teachers a pay increase well below the cost of living and doubling the amount of time teachers can be required to be at school during term breaks.

It also has ideas about fundamental changes to NCEA which, at the time of writing, had not been publicly announced. However, the Education Minister's statements in the media make it pretty clear that this Government wants to take secondary school qualifications back to the future. With more external exams, fewer course or subject options and less teacher involvement in assessing students' work.

By the time you are reading this, the details of the Government's proposal will be public, and I would urge you to make your voice heard. There are some important things that we need to keep in mind when it comes to reforming NCEA.

At its core, NCEA reflects values that New Zealanders hold dear - fairness, flexibility, and the belief that every student deserves a chance to succeed. It was designed to move away from a rigid, exclusive model and toward one that recognises individual strengths and diverse pathways. It allows students to engage with learning that matters to them and to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that reflect their abilities.

This approach has helped create an education system that doesn't assume all students learn the same way or thrive under the same conditions. It has given teachers the ability to tailor learning to their students' needs and interests, and it has given students the opportunity to succeed in a range of subjects and formats. These are not weaknesses—they are strengths that should be preserved.

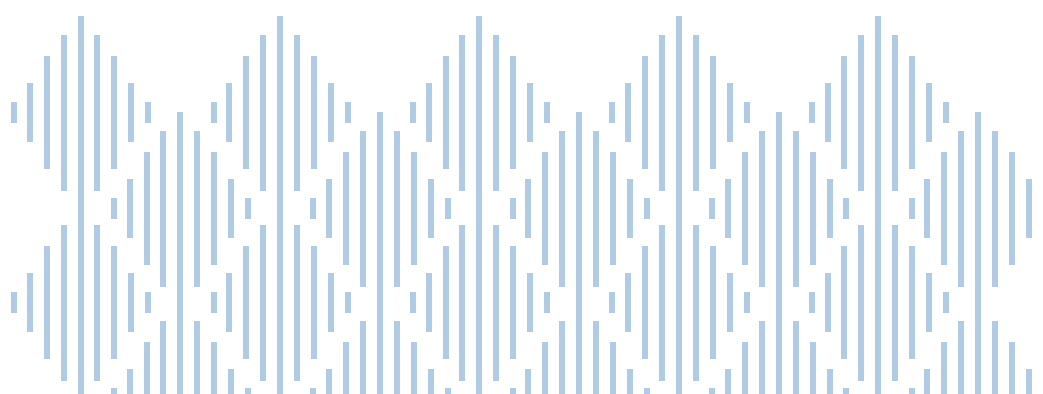
Of course, no system is perfect. NCEA must continue to evolve to meet the needs of today's learners. But any changes must build on what works—not destroy it.

Reform is necessary—but it must be thoughtful, inclusive, and evidence-based. Let's listen to the voices of students, teachers, and communities who know the value of NCEA—along with its challenges. If there are areas that need improvement—such as more coherence in course design or a better balance between internal and external assessments—let's address them thoughtfully and collaboratively.

It really feels like there is a lot at stake for secondary education right now. We must ensure that our voice, the voice of the profession, the voice of those who work with young people every day, the voice of those who want to bring out the very best, is heard above the rest.

Thank you for your amazing mahi and thank you for the actions you will take during the next weeks and months as we stand together for public education. Toitū te mātauranga, toitū ngā kura.

Solidarity forever.





Musings from your former Teaching Council representative

Advocating for teachers is a role that the Teaching Council has focused on in recent years, writes Mike Connor

Kia ora koutou e hoa mā

I have just served my three years of time, for Queen and Country, on the much maligned, oft misunderstood Teaching Council.

I did not stand for a second stint as I'm getting a bit long in the tooth and I'm probably more agent provocateur than an agent for governance. Remember, I basically got elected because I said I did not like the Teaching Council. Now that I understand it better, I think I would say that I do not like paying for the Teaching Council.

I can honestly say that the workers, some 100 or so, are, to a person, batting hard for the teaching profession. I wandered the Wellington office quite often, stopping to ask questions, see what people were up to and how things were going in their particular line of mahi. They were engaged, capable and earnestly and inclusively working bloody hard and bloody well. A few have been teachers, but most not. This makes little difference, as the mana with which they hold teachers is, actually, a bit humbling.

On the Council itself, I came to understand its core role – registration, sorting out issues to do with teachers and codes and standards for teachers. I had battles, fractious relationships, words of derision and scorn thrown my way – and that was just in the café on the bottom floor of the building. But I got to see representatives from all the sectors of education – Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary and Initial Teacher Education – fighting hard and eloquently for their sector and their teachers. Yes, some teachers do not toe the line, but that is a very few of our 140,000 strong profession.

The Council also advocates for teachers and this is the role it has really focused on in recent times. Teachers, we know, are undervalued, undermined and underpaid. But the general public perception of teachers and teaching is one of admiration, respect and gratitude. We, however, do not hold ourselves in such high regard – but we should. So, the Council is trying to bridge that perceptual gap.



Mike Connor

The brain-connection, black and white nodal thingy, teaching campaign might have more effect than we think.

While I have been on the Council, relations with the PPTA have been very strong. I, in my 40 years at the chalk face, have always been a keen PPTA man. Still am. The divide that separated the initial iterations of the Council was deep and wide. Not so now.

Without swimming in each other's lanes, I have seen the Council and PPTA work with some key common goals for the profession. I hope this will continue. With the present Government's ultra right-wing agenda of underfunding and its non-sensical spin, I think the idea of mutual understanding and co-operation will be more Tui ad than anything else.

On my watch, but not likely because of it, we did not have to pay for the Teaching Council fees – once thanks to our Union and once to Erica, who simply robbed Peter to pay Paul. I strongly believe we should not have to pay the Council fees and levies. Successive governments simply kick said can down said road. Long may this discontinue.

The role of the Council does cost the \$18 million it uses a year to run. The roles are

set by statute, and the Council makes good use of its funds. Of that, I have no doubt whatsoever. The management team, who are an innovative and quite dynamic team – just look at the Council's Wall of Identity, Te Pātū o te Whare – do their mahi well.

But they are always seeking to improve the relationship between the Teaching Council and teachers. They know engagement levels are low, dissatisfaction is high and what do they do anyway is still a common call. Much of this is due to misconception and much because we have to pay. After three years in the mix, I am more informed and see what it is that is done and why it is being done.

Have I, a self-proclaimed dissenting voice of the masses, become a turncoat, a traitor to the teacher I claim to represent? No, not I. But I am also big enough to fess up that I misunderstood, probably deliberately, the Teaching Council. I can be both a proud Union man and someone who sees the value of the Council to teachers and their profession. I just don't wanna pay for it!

**Mike Connor was the secondary teachers' representative on the Teaching Council for the last three years.*



Looking for funding for individual training or professional development?

HealthCarePlus's 'Grants for Good' may be just what you need - applications are now open.

After more than a decade in New Zealand classrooms, high school teacher Hannah Watson has witnessed firsthand how mental health challenges can derail a young person's education and future. Now, thanks to a HealthCarePlus Grant for Good, she's taking her passion for student wellbeing to the next level by training to become a school counsellor.

"Every day, I see how wellbeing (or a lack of it) affects learning, attendance and behaviour," says Hannah. "Working closely with rangatahi and seeing how much they carry every day – anxiety, trauma, stress – made it clear to me how important wellbeing is to learning and life."

Growing her skills

The turning point for Hannah came through those precious one-on-one moments that every teacher treasures.

"Some of the most meaningful moments I've had as a teacher have come from conversations when a student felt safe enough to open up," she reflects. "I wanted to grow my skills so I can better support students in those moments."

Hannah's decision to pursue postgraduate counselling studies wasn't just professional – it was deeply personal. Her own experience receiving counselling during a difficult period revealed the transformative power of having someone truly listen.

"It showed me how life-changing it can be, and I want to offer that kind of support to others," she says.

Easy application process

When a friend shared the HealthCarePlus Grant for Good opportunity, Hannah knew it was perfect timing. As both a PPTA and HealthCarePlus member, the alignment felt natural. "It felt like a good fit, and the grant aligned with what I'm hoping to achieve," she says.

The application process exceeded her expectations.

"It was easy to follow, and the communication was kind and clear," Hannah recalls. "It felt like there was



Hannah Watson

genuine care for what I was doing, and that they truly wanted to help."

The financial support proved invaluable during an intense year of juggling work and study. But beyond the practical help, the grant provided something equally important: validation.

Beyond the practical help, the grant provided something equally important: validation.

"It made me feel supported, that someone believed in what I was doing and was willing to back me," Hannah says.

For Hannah, this grant represents her ability to be present for young people when they need it most. "Mental health has a huge impact on how young people see themselves and how they engage with school," she explains. "I want to become a fully qualified school counsellor who helps young people feel heard, supported and empowered."

Her vision extends to creating meaningful access to support. "It will

give more students access to a trusted adult who listens without judgement, helps them make sense of what they're going through, and supports them to develop strategies for coping in tough moments."

To others considering applying for grants, Hannah's advice is simple:

"If you're doing something that contributes to others and you believe in it, you should apply!" Her tip for applicants? "Be clear about what you're doing, what you need, and why it matters."

Hannah's journey from teacher to counsellor-in-training embodies the spirit of HealthCarePlus's Grant for Good programme, which supports individuals who are committed to making a genuine difference in their communities. Through her future work, countless young people will benefit from having someone who truly understands their challenges and is equipped to help them navigate life's difficult moments.

Applications for Grant for Good individual projects close on Friday 5 September.

For more information, visit healthcareplus.org.nz → [grants-for-good](#)

Media literacy needed urgently in schools

A dedicated Digital Citizenship and Wellbeing Lead in every secondary school is being called for in a paper to next month's PPTA Annual Conference.

Recent moves to make financial literacy a compulsory part of the curriculum are a welcome and pragmatic step towards equipping young people with tools for the so-called 'real world'. But in the same spirit, it's vital we treat media literacy with equal urgency, say the authors of a paper that will be considered by PPTA Te Wehengarua annual conference next month.

"Young people are growing up in an algorithm-driven media landscape where disinformation, extreme content, and manipulative narratives are only ever a click or two away. A refreshed curriculum that fails to embed media literacy as a core competency risks leaving both students and teachers unprepared for the complexities and risks of contemporary digital life."

Increasing distrust of 'traditional' institutions

The paper recommends that the Ministry of Education develops and funds a dedicated Digital Citizenship and Wellbeing Lead in every secondary school, responsible for staff training, curriculum integration and student support, who can work alongside classroom teachers and pastoral teams.

The paper says that anecdotally, many PPTA members have spoken about the impact of disinformation on their classrooms, particularly since the COVID 19 pandemic. Students are increasingly distrustful of 'traditional' institutions.

"Similarly, teachers - particularly women - are facing increasing misogynistic pushback from students who have been radicalised by 'manosphere' content.

Call for more resources

The paper also recommends that professional and learning development (PLD) resources be developed for teachers, to ensure that every secondary teacher has access to quality PLD, developed through the engagement of experts and interested groups in this area. These resources would help teachers to recognise and respond to harmful

online content and resilience against extremist ideologies, empower teachers to help students make links between historical and contemporary forms of fascism, and enable teachers to manage classroom discussions with sensitivity and confidence.

Additional strain on staff and resources

"Teachers are expected to respond to complex issues of digital culture, media literacy and student radicalisation with little or no specialist training. An increasing amount of bullying and concerning behaviour is now happening outside of school in online spaces, many of which teachers have limited understanding of or access to. This

places additional strain on our already stretched staff and resources.

"This is a matter of urgency, and the solution will be found in a full spectrum of approaches. If we do not act decisively, we risk allowing online extremism, misogyny, and false information to erode the inclusive and respectful values we strive to nurture in our schools. Our classrooms are not ideological battlegrounds - they are spaces for learning, empathy, and growth. Our young people deserve protection and support."

Topics of other papers being considered at PPTA Te Wehengarua annual conference include addressing unmet student need, the future of NCEA, pay equity, and the disestablishment of Kāhui Ako.



Have your say on key educational and industrial issues

PPTA Te Wehengarua Annual Conference is the Association's supreme policy making body, but the process starts with YOU and your branch.

All the conference papers are on the MyPage section of the PPTA website. You will need to enter your MoE number and PPTA password.

You can give your feedback at a branch meeting or directly to your branch officer. Your view will then

be fed into pre-conference regional meetings that will be held in late August / September.

The pre-conference meeting will determine how your regional delegates will vote on each paper. If you feel particularly strongly about an issue, you should attend your regional meeting. Ask one of your branch officers or contact your local field office to get details of the date and venue for the regional meeting.



Pastoral care allowances making an impact

New pastoral care allowances introduced into schools this year have received an overwhelmingly positive response

In the last collective agreement settlement (2022-23) 1,877 new pastoral care allowances were won for secondary and area schools as part of the PPTA Te Wehengarua vision for teachers being well-supported.

Each allowance provides the time for one day per week for kaiako to focus on pastoral care. The allowances became available from the start of this school year.

In Term 2, principals were surveyed to find out how the allowances were affecting schools. The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Just under half of schools created new roles or employed new staff in pastoral care

By Term 2 most schools had fully allocated their allowance, largely to deans, guidance counsellors and careers teachers.

Just under half of schools also created new roles or employed new staff in pastoral care. The new roles or employees were most often deans, but schools also created or expanded non-traditional roles, like a PB4L lead, a Pathways Coordinator, assistant deans



and dean support roles, a refugees and migrants dean, a Māori Kaihapi, a Te Ahi Kaa teacher, a Kaiawhina, and a Youth Engagement leader.

Some schools had already committed significant other funding to pastoral care beyond the small amount provided by the Ministry. In these instances, the allowances enabled the schools to redirect funding back into the curriculum or to employ 'wrap-around' staffing such as youth workers and a nurse.

Despite the boost, most principals don't think they have enough pastoral care time yet to meet the needs of ākonga.

Principals indicated they would use more allowances to further expand pastoral care positions, create new pastoral care positions and employ more staff in pastoral care roles.

PPTA has a claim, in the current Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement negotiations, for a further 1,330 pastoral care allowances for secondary schools.

What principals told us

'These allowances are desperately needed and have the potential to save so much money long term with students not going into the prison population or needing major support from our health system.'

'It has allowed us to give deans time that they need in order to deal with the complex issues young people in our school have today. It's made a big difference in allowing them time to get to more students not just the urgent ones.'

'It reduced the workload for already

overstretched middle managers as it provided a much-needed extra layer of care for vulnerable students.'

'The ability to increase pastoral time release has been invaluable. With more release we managed to get another dean release, and that has meant staff workload has been shared, and therefore less pressure. Response times for outcomes has been reduced.'

'Trying to support our deans to a higher level ... but this was expensive. Pastoral care allowances provided necessary extra 'staffing' to balance

our books.'

'Helpful, but with the needs of our ākonga it is still insufficient. All staff who are involved in pastoral have clearly indicated that there is not enough time in any given day to provide the necessary support for our ākonga.'

'There appears to be a growing need to provide more effective pastoral care for students and the pastoral care allowances are a much-needed addition to staffing that secondary schools can use to address this situation.'



Introducing Joschka Hoffman

Joschka is PPTA Te Wehengarua's newest advisory officer and member of the STCA negotiating team

Q: What are some highlights of your time at PPTA so far?

A: One personal highlight for me was running into one of my own teachers from my time as a high school student at Trinity Catholic College (as it is now called) in Dunedin. For context, I have just celebrated my 40th birthday, so it is really incredible to think about the contribution many of our long-serving teachers make to their communities over the course of an entire teaching career.

A second highlight of working in my role is the mahi I get to do with the negotiation teams. Collective bargaining can be a challenging and frustrating experience. However, it is always very rewarding to see how quickly member leaders learn to navigate the bargaining environment and to reflect on the efforts and sacrifices members are willing to make for the benefit of the collective.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your career background - you're not a teacher, are you?

A: No, you are quite right. In terms of my academic background, I have completed an LLM at Victoria University of Wellington Te Herenga Waka and prior to that I completed an LLB and BA(Hons) in Political studies at Otago University.

Because I have no background in teaching myself, I am very mindful of the fact that I am not an expert in pedagogy or the New Zealand Curriculum. However, the good thing about working in a teacher union is that there will never be a shortage of people who are willing to teach you the skills you are lacking if you show an interest in learning.

In terms of my work background, I have most recently worked at NZEI Te Riu Roa. Over my years of working there, I have had different positions. Most recently, I was working as an advocate responsible for bargaining some of NZEI Te Riu Roa's national collective agreements.

Q: You are from Germany originally - where in Germany are you from



Joschka Hoffman

and what brought you to Aotearoa New Zealand?

A: I was born in a town near the Dutch border, but I grew up in a small village in the northeast of Germany at the coast of the Baltic Sea called Prerow. I first came to New Zealand in high school for a year to learn English. I then moved to New Zealand permanently to be with my then-girlfriend and now wife who studied in Dunedin.

Q: What do you miss about Germany?

A: I miss my whānau overseas. My parents are getting older and being on the other side of the world can at times be challenging.

Other than that, I miss some of the local food from the region where I grew up - mostly the fish and seafood.

Q: What don't you miss about Germany?

A: I don't miss the long, dark and cold German winters. When I was younger, the cold never bothered me. However, I have

now lived in New Zealand for more than half of my life and it is fair to say that I have grown accustomed to the much milder and brighter Wellington winters.

So, when I travel back to Germany (which is usually during a New Zealand summer holiday), it is often a bit of a rude awakening to experience the cold and grey north German winters where you might not see the sun for a week because the sky is either grey or pitch black.

I realize that, within New Zealand, Wellington is not exactly known for its excellent weather either - despite being so obviously unbeatable on a good day. But personally, I will take the Wellington winter over a German winter any day.

Q: What is one of the best things about living in New Zealand?

A: The people. I love living in New Zealand and this has been a really fantastic place to raise our daughter. Whenever I do travel overseas, I enjoy my holiday but when I land back in a New Zealand airport, I am equally always very happy to hear the customs officer tell me "Welcome home".



Kōrero

Letter to the editor

Women should not and do not bear the sole responsibility of bringing children into the world

Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to an article published in the June edition of the *PPTA News* magazine. The article titled “Aotearoa New Zealand - but not as we know it” is concerning for its insidiously subtle misogynistic undertones.

The section titled Falling Fertility Rates is an infuriating read from the female perspective. While Professor Spoonley is correct in his statistics regarding the falling birth rates in New Zealand (and global) society, it is heavily targeted toward women being the cause of this. It would be more accurate and more fair to actually acknowledge the multiple factors that are contributing to this trend.

Women are not the only reason we have declining birth rates. That is a misogynistic and frankly disturbingly incorrect point to be making. It is well known that we as a country are in a cost

of living crisis and that our economy has been in a precarious state for some time. It is not unfair to not want to bring children into situations where their futures cannot be certain. It is also not fair to assume or perpetuate that women are the sole reason for this. Men make choices not to have children too, as they are well entitled to. It would be more accurate to mention that people in general are less inclined to have children.

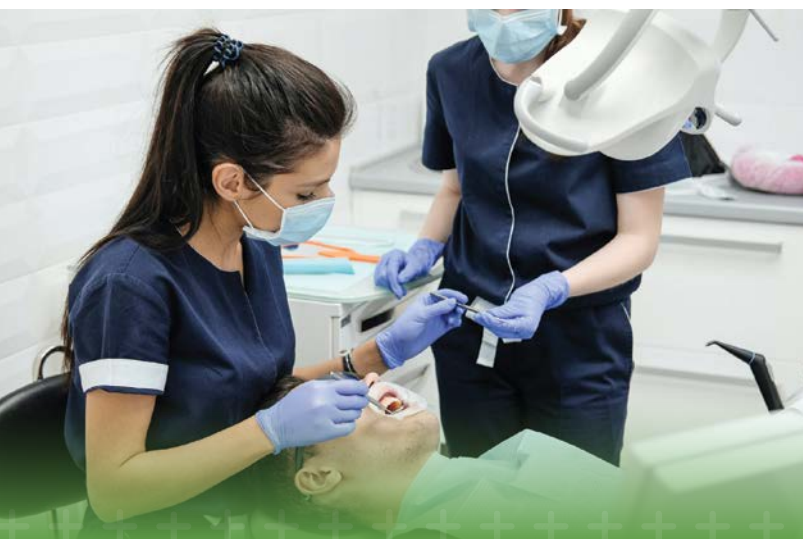
The mention of having a tertiary education causing women to be less inclined to have children may be technically accurate, but it is a mentality that is often used to degrade women's choices and to peddle the idea of the “modern woman” being a detriment to her society. There is a rising attitude that has been prevalent in society for some time around women and their social progressions. One only needs to glance at the internet for a moment to see the

numerous “experts” on their right-wing podcasts that diminish the achievements of women based on their marital statuses and whether or not they are mothers.

Women should not and do not bear the sole responsibility of bringing children into the world. To be colloquial - it takes two to tango (usually). One would think that a professor of sociology would be more aware of the words and impressions they are giving when presenting “scholarly research”. We are teachers after all; it is our job to be aware of the biases we may or may not be playing into when creating content.

I am sure I am not the only person who has similar feelings after reading Spoonley's piece. My students certainly found it offensive when I read it aloud to them, if that is of any relevance or interest.

Thank you for your time.
Abbey Barnes-Wright



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Momentous Māori Teachers' Conference

This year's Māori Teachers' Conference celebrated its 30th anniversary with a range of inspiring speakers, excellent workshops and a beautiful - and delicious - cake

PPTA Te Wehengarua, Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake, warmly invited all kaiako from secondary schools, wharekura, and area schools to the 30th PPTA Te Wehengarua Māori Teachers' Conference (MTC), held in Rotorua from 6-8 Hūrae / July 2025.

This hui marked a momentous occasion - celebrating 30 years of whakawhanaungatanga, mātauranga, and Māori educational leadership. The conference theme, "Ake, ake tonu atu - Resilience at its Finest, was appropriate for honouring the unwavering strength of Māori educators and exploring how resilience has shaped our collective journey in education.

Strengthening our futures

The keynote speakers covered a range of current topics relevant to Māori kaiako and taura alike. Chartered accountant, Kateriina Selwyn, spoke of harnessing Māori data sovereignty to strengthen our futures.

Shanna Rope, PPTA Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake representative and curriculum leader Te Reo Māori at One Tree Hill College, found Kateriina's kōrero fascinating. "In schools we deal a lot

with data, we're talking about data, we're analysing data, but to see it from an iwi governance perspective was really cool."

Another keynote speaker, Arama Morunga, shared how he engages Tamariki in mau taiaha, the training and knowledge shared in the development of their skills. He highlighted the importance of enabling young people to learn knowledge that is unique to Aotearoa.

Thirty years of the Māori Teachers' Conference is a wonder, it's a sight, it's magnificent

Finding your star

Rawiri Waititi - Te Pāti Māori tāne co-leader - was the final keynote speaker, and he asked, "How do we transform from being a kaiako to a kāpehu?" The kāpehu is a compass and is used to navigate. Young people need to find their star, and our job (kaiako, whānau) is to help them navigate their way to that star. This was a well-received message and there were many selfies taken at the end of his address.

A significant workshop was the launch of the Te Reo Māori Subject Association - the result of much work and dedication to get it up and going. Its future, providing advice and resources for kaiako Māori across the motu, will be most welcome.

There were many other excellent workshops; Judith Hunt shared a wealth of information and knowledge on NCEA Māori, as did NZQA's Anthony Karauria in explaining some of the pitfalls he finds in external moderation. Other workshops covered Te Ao Haka, Rangatahi Toitū Te Tiriti - Waitangi, and Te Whare Huata o Manono.

Sharing the hīkoi experience

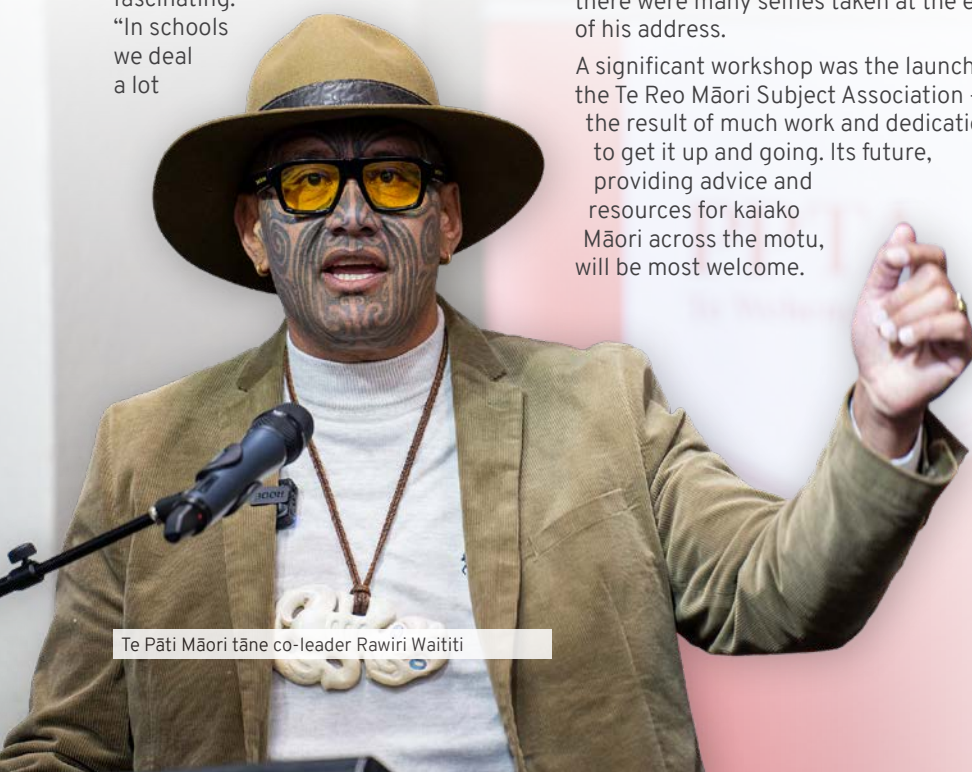
A workshop that stood out for Shanna was one presented by three Northland rangatahi who talked about the journey they took on the Te Tiriti hīkoi last year.

"They started from the top of the motu and went all the way to Wellington. When times got hard they had this mantra which was 'the kaupapa's bigger than the person' - it was just fantastic to see that. We put so much effort and time into our students and for them to take the leadership and responsibility for some of the stuff that we're dealing with, and to take that along with them on the hīkoi, was really great. They were a little bit nervous in front of a bunch of teachers, but they presented so well - they were delightful to watch."

Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua panel, facilitated by Robert Diamond, certainly highlighted the depth of knowledge and dedication to Māori education of panellists Rangitihia Pene, Dr Te Makao Bowkett, Tureriti Waititi, Shona O'Keefe, Tihi Puanaki, Papa Moeke. This was a reflection on MTC over the years, often humorous as well as thought-provoking.

The conference hākari was a fitting celebration of the 30th anniversary of the PPTA Te Wehengarua National Māori Teachers' Conference. Participants were invited to embrace the spirit of the conference theme 'Ake, ake tonu atu' by dressing in red, black, and/or white for dinner, and there were many glorious outfits, with the best awarded prizes.

"Thirty years of the Maori Teachers' Conference is a wonder, it's a sight, it's magnificent so to be there on the 30th anniversary was really great - it was a really spirited effort," says Shanna.



Te Pāti Māori tāne co-leader Rawiri Waititi





Educate to liberate

Formed by a group of teenagers more than 50 years ago, the Polynesian Panthers is passing on the baton in schools and workplaces around Aotearoa

Once a panther always a panther. That's what Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae, one of the original Polynesian Panthers, told participants at the PPTA Te Wehengarua Fono in early July.

The Polynesian Panthers are a social justice movement, based on the United States Black Panther Party, that was formed more than 50 years ago.

Melani Anae was just 16 when she snuck out of home to attend a Polynesian Panther Party meeting, to stand up particularly against the racism in Auckland which was hurting families and communities.

Just kids

"Some people call us revolutionaries, some people call us freedom fighters, some people call us activists, but our own communities called us moepi which means bed wetters, which we were. We were just kids and it was just something we had to do.

"We shone a light on how things were hurting us that nobody cared about – housing, education, justice, police brutality. We shone a light on that for the whole of New Zealand to benefit from."

The Polynesian Panthers was formed not long before the infamous dawn raids in Aotearoa New Zealand, where police stormed the homes of Pacific Islanders in the middle of the night, demanding to see their immigration documents.

Pacific Islanders made up only a third of overstayers at the time – the majority were from England, South Africa and Canada. And not one dawn raid occurred in the 'white' Auckland suburbs.

Reverse raids

To show politicians what dawn raids felt like, the Polynesian Panthers carried out reverse raids – turning up outside Government MPs' homes at 3am with loud hailer telling residents to "Come out now with your passports".

When the lights came on, and the front door opened, the Panthers piled into their cars and left the scene.

Not long after, the Government called off the dawn raids.

Along with the reverse raids and other peaceful protests, the Polynesian Panthers helped provide a range of legal aid, educational and housing assistance to Māori and Pasifika.

"Community survival programmes that we put together as kids actually became mainstream," says Melani.

My measuring stick is what's happening to people, what are the statistics? They haven't changed, we're still at the bottom of the heap and that's what institutional racism does

The courts' duty solicitor programme, the Tenancy Tribunal and the Independent Police Conduct Authority, all have their origins in initiatives that were begun by the Polynesian Panthers.

"I still can't believe that we did those things at such a young age."

Institutional racism

Half a century on are we a less racist country?

"On the surface things are looking better, we've got diversity and more Pacific MPs but my measuring stick is what's happening to people, what are the statistics? They haven't changed, we're still at the bottom of the heap and that's what institutional racism does. It's designed to keep some people higher than the others and that's just a fact."

Passing on the panther baton

For the last 20 years Melani Anae and other Panthers have been running Educate to Liberate workshops for schools. "We've talked to thousands and thousands and thousands of kids all over New Zealand about racism through our

Panther lens. When we go to schools, we say that we are passing the baton on to you, you are the future leaders of this country, and you need to know what has gone on here."

The workshops were so successful that teachers started asking for a workshop. "So that has morphed into Our Living Room workshop which is aimed at corporate organisations."

Melani says that the Panthers' demands for the annihilation of institutional racism in NZ might seem revolutionary and drastic. "But it is time we all stood up. When you feel racism, stand up, when you see racism, stand up.

"Panthers have been fighting for the last 50 years for the Crown and the Government to acknowledge that the system is racist, to overhaul the institutions and to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and tino rangatiratanga for Māori.

"Much work needs to be done to decolonise and indigenise our education system – why is the teaching of the dawn raids only optional and not compulsory? Our platform of peaceful resistance and celebrations of Mana Pasifika and liberating education is as relevant now as it was in the era of the dawn raids."



Misatauveve Dr Melani Anae





Weaving together your kete

A wealth of practical advice emerged from a panel at the Provisionally Certificated Teachers' hui in July

Just like the instruction on an airplane to put on your own oxygen mask first, teachers need to look after themselves first to be able to look after their students.

This was a piece of sage advice given to fifth year teacher Louise Ryan by her mentor, which she has never forgotten.

"As teachers we have a lot of teacher guilt, we push ourselves to the brink because we don't want to be sick, we don't want to be away because that's going to impact our students. But sometimes you have to take a step back and think about yourself first because if you're not running at 100%, you're not going to give 100% to your students. I now have student teachers, and I teach them that. Because you're not going to be any use to your students if you're running at 5% battery, right?"

Change makers

Louise was part of a panel discussion providing encouragement and advice to participants at the Provisionally Certificated Teachers' Conference, held in Wellington in the July term break.

Asked what he loves about teaching, Taranaki teacher, Laurence Earl, said it was seeing the change you're making. "Seeing those kids who come in at Year 9 or Year 7 and watching them grow up and become adults."

Another thing he loved was "that sort of click, that 'aha' moment, when they get something - that is what keeps me going. There are some kids who had no idea they could do anything digital, had never coded before in their life and then they jump on to a computer and they get it and they're away - that is awesome."

You're giving them the helping hand they need and having the opportunity to do that is a pleasure and privilege

Josh Wilson, a third year teacher from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, said he loved having a hand in helping shape the next generation of young people and giving them a chance to express themselves.

"I work in media studies, so I get to hand young people a bunch of this expensive camera equipment that I worry about for hours after school, but they often get to create some really beautiful things."

Guiding hands

He also loves being surprised by the work created by ākonga. "It's the ones who all of a sudden create amazing pieces of art and it's a privilege to be able to stand there and guide them on that. You're not the one doing their work, they are. But you're giving them the helping hand they need and having the opportunity to do that is a pleasure and privilege."

In her first year, Louise taught a Year 9 class who are now Year 13s. "I have got to watch them grow into these young adults who have really intelligent conversations with me and are making plans for their future and are excited about going to university, going into the trades, or starting their own business. I love seeing the next generation excited about where their lives are going."

Being yourself is an important step towards being a confident classroom





teacher, said Laurence. “In my first couple of years I think I had this idea of what a teacher should be, and I tried really hard to fit that mould and it was exhausting. It wasn’t until I moved to a different school, and I thought, ‘you know what - I’m just going to be myself’ and that’s when it got easier.”

What about the bad days?

Every teacher has bad days, and all the panellists had various ways of dealing with such days.

Laurence said he took on a new role this year of being a whare pastoral

leader “which is a real fancy name for a dean. It’s been a big step up and there’s been a lot more issues and unexpected learnings I’ve had to face. For me I need to just disconnect at the end of the day, make sure I leave the work stuff at work and come home and take some time for myself and my wife.”

Burnout and tiredness are a reality of teaching, said Josh. “If you are having a bad day, if you’re struggling, take that time - your sick days are yours. You’re not going to be an effective educator or classroom teacher if you are in your head about whatever’s going on in your

life. Stay at home and text the relief line. Accept it – you’re human after all.”

Watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer helps Louise get through the hard times and keeps her grounded. “It’s doing things that I enjoy. (Involvement in) PPTA is kind of teaching but for me it brings me a lot of joy.”

Reaching out when you need to, is also highly recommended by Louise. “The work that we do is so rewarding in so many ways but there are times when you just need someone to talk to - whether that’s a colleague, or your best friend, or a professional therapist.”

Subject Association Forum

Representatives from almost all the subject associations gathered in Wellington recently for PPTA Te Wehengarua's annual forum

The secondary teaching workforce is a deep well of expertise and professionalism. And issues of curriculum and assessment simply must have a strong voice of teachers in design, content, and implementation.

These were the opening words from Kieran Gainsford, PPTA Te Wehengarua Junior Vice President, when he welcomed subject association presidents and chairs to the Subject Association Forum in July.

The forum, held in Wellington in the second week of the term break, was attended by 30 representatives from nearly all the subject associations.

Kieran told forum participants that the work of subject associations has always been proudly supported by PPTA Te Wehengarua.

"The very idea of subject associations arose out of what were called PPTA Curriculum Panels, in the 1970s. In the intervening decades, subject associations, including all of those represented in this room, have evolved to become independent and effective organisations that lobby and work hard on behalf of their subjects and the professionals who teach those subjects.

"What has not changed, however, is the commitment from PPTA Te Wehengarua, and from all of you, to the principle of a voice by, for, and of teachers."

Kieran reminded participants of last year's forum and the heavy focus there on sharing expertise and building the capacity of subject associations to advocate for their subjects and their members in public forums, in the media, and at the political level.

It is more critical than ever that subject associations can speak clearly on behalf of your members and can speak truth to power.

"Since that time, even a quick glance at media stories about curriculum and NCEA shows how that work has paid off. Subject associations are increasingly visible and able to ensure that your voices are heard and considered as the political winds have shifted around us."

He said it was almost a cliché to say that there's a lot of change going on at the moment. "But it really is true right now. We know that there are big decisions to be made about all three levels of NCEA.

"We know that the curriculum refresh-that-isn't-a-refresh is gathering pace and is requiring more and more of subject associations. We know as well that the

Ministry of Education relies on the expertise that only subject associations can assemble to make this programme of change a success.

"And, of course, all of this is taking place in what is shaping up to possibly be a difficult industrial environment in our state and state-integrated schools."

PPTA Te Wehengarua could speak with one voice on industrial and professional issues that affect the entire workforce. However, individual subjects relied on their subject association heads to speak for them.

"In the context of tight funding and a shortage of teachers, it is more critical than ever that subject associations can speak clearly on behalf of your members and can speak truth to power."

The two-day forum had a varied programme that blended the expertise of PPTA Te Wehengarua with that of subject associations, and outside experts. Along with a range of workshops and panels, the forum also featured updates from PPTA staff about the PLD fund, support for teachers, and how to use the Official Information Act to get crucial education information. Education Ministry and Qualifications Authority officials ran Q&A sessions, and participants enjoyed an illuminating visit to Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand.

Keep in the PPTA loop

The Collective News keeps you up to date with all professional and industrial issues – make sure you're subscribed

All PPTA Te Wehengarua members can receive the latest information on professional and union issues via the Collective News, PPTA Te Wehengarua's regular e-news bulletin.

The Collective News is sent to your inbox every second Wednesday during the school term – and more regularly

when there is urgent information, such as significant developments in collective agreement negotiations.

If you are not receiving these, and would like to, please email Philippa Lagan plagan@ppta.org.nz and we will add you to the list.







Out in the Field

What if you find yourself facing criminal allegations?

Teachers are in a position of significant responsibility and public scrutiny. If criminal allegations arise it is essential, not only for you but also the wider school, that the appropriate steps are taken, to protect your rights and the trust of the wider school community.

Criminal allegations are sometimes directly related to professional conduct, others from events from outside the school context and some from non-factual information provided.

Immediate steps following an allegation

1. Seek legal advice and support

As soon as you learn of a criminal allegation it is crucial to seek immediate legal advice to provide you with guidance of your rights and responsibilities.

Contact your field officer. PPTA Te Wehengarua provides legal assistance for your first meeting with your lawyer. Further legal assistance may be approved by the Deputy General Secretary of Membership depending on the nature of the allegations. Your field officer will be able to guide you through this process.

2. Do not go into a police interview without your lawyer

Even if you think that the allegations are completely unfounded it is important that you have legal counsel. You, literally, do not want to say anything that may be used against you in a court of law.

3. Maintain confidentiality

Do not discuss the matter with colleagues, students, or members of the school community, except as advised by your lawyer or field officer.

4. Access support services

When a teacher is facing serious allegations, it can have a huge impact on not only their personal and professional lives but also wider reaching ramifications for their whānau, colleagues, friends and



communities. It is imperative that you have confidential support in place for your personal well-being. Your field officer will be able to ensure that your employer provides this for you.

5. Notify the school and Teaching Council of Aotearoa NZ

Teachers are obligated to inform their principal, provided this has not already happened through official channels. Schools have reporting obligations to the Teaching Council and, where relevant, to the police and/or Oranga Tamariki. These agencies may also report the matter directly to the Teaching Council.

There is a requirement for you, the teacher, to self-report to the Teaching Council if you receive a conviction. It is important to do this in a timely manner and bodes well for you in the Teaching Council process. Wait for the outcome of your court process before you report. Sometimes there are unexpected outcomes, such as the case is dismissed and you need not have ever disclosed to the Teaching Council.

Navigating the investigation process

6. Understanding the dual pathways:

Criminal and professional investigations

Criminal allegations against teachers often trigger parallel investigations: one by the police and another by the school and/or Teaching Council. The criminal process is governed by the law and the presumption of innocence, whilst professional investigations assess fitness to teach, professional standards, code of ethics – sometimes irrespective of the outcome of the criminal proceedings. Teachers may receive a conviction, for example driving under the influence of alcohol, but still be considered fit to teach by the Teaching Council.

7. Suspension and stand-down procedures

In the interest of student and/or teacher safety, a teacher may be asked if they will take discretionary leave or in more serious situations, suspended. Talk to your field officer.

This is not a presumption of guilt, but it is essential that it is managed correctly to uphold your mana and dignity throughout the process.

8. Documentation and record-keeping

You should keep detailed records of all correspondence related to the allegations. It is advisable to use your personal email address when communicating with your field officer anything that you do not want your school to have access to. Your communication with your field officer is confidential but your school has ownership of all content of your school email address.

9. Managing public and media attention

In high-profile cases, or days when there isn't much other news, teachers may get contacted by the media. Refuse any comment. Protecting your personal privacy and maintaining the integrity of the legal process is essential.

In short – go home, stay home, say nothing until you have spoken with your field officer.



Who pays the school counsellor—and why does it matter?

The role of the school counsellor is often shaped more by gaps in the system than by good practice, writes Emma Eaglen

School counsellors are vital to student wellbeing. Yet their ability to do the job well is shaped not just by care and skill, but by structures that are inconsistent, precarious, and often poorly understood. My recent Master of Counselling research explored the experiences of teacher-counsellors—professionals expected to manage both teaching and counselling workloads in their schools.

Unstable tenure and blurred professional requirements

Pay and employment conditions vary between schools. Some school counsellors are paid under teacher collective agreements, others under support staff agreements, and others on temporary Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) contracts. This patchwork creates inequities not only in salary but also in access to professional development, clinical supervision, and job security. Since 2015, changes in teacher registration and LAT provisions have created new complications. To earn a salary on the teacher pay scale under this legislation, secondary school counsellors need a teaching qualification (such as a Bachelor of Education or an undergraduate degree in a subject area and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education) and must maintain an unspecified minimum number of class contact hours or apply for a LAT, which also requires an unspecified number of contact hours.

This situation leads to confusion and instability. Counsellors must constantly justify their legitimacy within a teaching framework that doesn't always reflect their actual practice.

Role management: Who sets the boundaries?

The management of the counselling role is typically delegated to school leadership. While some schools value and protect the therapeutic space, others absorb counsellors into general pastoral or discipline systems.

There is no mandated national ratio of students to counsellors, and schools retain full discretion over how to use the Guidance Entitlement funding. There is no legal requirement to employ counsellors at all. While the NZ Association of Counsellors recommends a student/counsellor ratio of 1:400, some participants in my study reported ratios closer to 1:1,000.

Add in teaching responsibilities, and the time left for therapeutic support shrinks dramatically. Juggling counselling with teaching timetables limits teacher-counsellor availability. This leaves the school counsellor particularly vulnerable, as their job depends on the goodwill and priorities of school leadership rather than any structural protection or guarantee.

Ethical tensions and burnout risks

The result of all this is ethical strain. Who gets seen? Who waits? What happens when a distressed student seeks help, but the counsellor is in a classroom—or working across multiple sites? There is a risk of missing an urgent case with possible liability/responsibility of the counsellor and the school. Ethical tensions arise, especially when counsellors are expected to enforce discipline and classroom behaviour management.

International and Aotearoa New Zealand research has well documented that school counsellors are reporting unrealistic expectations, burnout and stress. With urgent clients filling break times and lesson preparation pushed into evenings, counsellors risk burnout. Some participants in my study described situations where school counsellors are unavailable due to teaching responsibilities, and teachers and senior leaders, who do not have the training or expertise, become de facto emotional first responders as a stopgap.

What's at stake—and what needs to change?

The broader issue is this: The role of the school counsellor is often shaped more

by gaps in the system than by good practice. Counsellors are used to fill staffing shortages, to take on leftover roles, or to carry invisible loads. When they are unavailable during a crisis, the risk is not only to student safety but also to the counsellor's wellbeing and liability.

If we're serious about wellbeing in schools, structural change is needed. Based on my research, I recommend:

- 1. Mandating a 1:400 counsellor-student ratio**
With resourcing scaled for high-needs schools.
- 2. Centralising and ring-fencing funding**
To ensure specific funding for counsellors so every school can employ dedicated, qualified counsellors.
- 3. Standardising pay and employment conditions**
Including protected time for supervision and registration.
- 4. Auditing equity**
So we understand where the gaps are—and can address them.
- 5. School counsellors in school leadership**
School counsellors are qualified specialists who are assets to schools – participating and contributing to pastoral leadership is important.

Conclusion: Not just who pays—but what do we value?

How we fund and structure counselling in schools is not just a budgetary issue – it's a wellbeing issue, an equity issue and an ethical issue. When counsellors are expected to hold immense emotional responsibility without security, manageable workloads or independence, the students are impacted. If we value student wellbeing, we must also value the people we ask to protect it.

**Emma Eaglen is a school counsellor and former secondary teacher based in Auckland.*

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'.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Rob Willetts – rwilletts@ppta.org.nz

