



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

UPDATE ON THE TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS REVIEW



The Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce has made a comprehensive case for change to our education system, providing strong evidence of the inequity and underachievement in the current system. On the education front many of its proposals align with existing PPTA policy. However the proposed structure, particularly the hub model, poses serious risks to teachers' terms and conditions.

While PPTA appreciates that Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini is a blue skies document and that detail is necessarily limited at this stage, lack of detail means that we can only speculate on what the structure will look like and how it will operate.

This paper first summarises the key points in PPTA's submission on the report, and goes on to discuss concerns and state bottom lines that the government must meet if it wishes to gain PPTA's support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be received.
2. That PPTA supports an education system that provides timely and appropriate support to schools so that they can meet the needs of all their students.
3. That PPTA will only support proposals if national collective agreements are retained.
4. That teacher and principal terms and conditions be retained in any transition phase.
5. That PPTA rejects the proposal that principals be employed on limited tenure.
6. That PPTA's position is that if the College of Educational Leadership is established within the Teaching Council then it be fully centrally funded.
7. That PPTA seeks representation on the Establishment Group.

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2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. With the Tomorrow's Schools Review in its final phase, there is eager anticipation about what parts of Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini (the report) will go through from the first draft, and what will be changed. The Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (the taskforce) sought an extension because of the amount of feedback it received, so it is likely that there will be some significant changes to, or at least more detail about, the proposals. The minister will then consider the final report and make his recommendations.
- 2.2. It is unsurprising that the report polarised people, after all how schools are governed, administered and managed affects the everyday lives of teachers, parents and students. The introduction of Tomorrow's Schools is still branded in the memory of older teachers and parents, and is a cautionary tale of how an attempt to improve the system can go so wrong.

3. PART 1 – THE SUBMISSION

3.1. **How did PPTA respond to the taskforce proposals? (For full submission see PPTA website)**

PPTA found that the taskforce makes a comprehensive case for change and has provided strong evidence of the equity and achievement failings of the current system. We supported the move away from unhealthy competition between schools to a system that ensures that schools are fully supported at the local level so that they can meet the needs of all their students, and that allows decisions to be made at the appropriate level. This includes the provision of an extended range of services to teachers and principals, especially around curriculum, assessment, leadership and learning support, including the sharing of professional expertise through secondments and enhanced career paths for teachers.

3.2. **Governance**

PPTA supports the proposal to regionalise some tasks that boards may find onerous (property maintenance and buildings, human resources, procurement, digital technology services, accounting, financial reporting, administration around suspensions) and the provision of more focused leadership support for principals, with a view to providing early assistance so schools are not left to sink into a spiral of decline.

- 3.3. We support a reoriented role for boards of trustees. There is no doubt that parental engagement with schools is an important contributor to children's success and one of the positive things to come out of Tomorrow's Schools was that secondary schools, in particular, became more open to parental involvement and more aware of the importance of keeping parents informed and building relationships with them. However, there are too many decisions currently made at board of trustee level that boards are neither the most skilled nor the most efficient body to make. In addition the temporary nature of the job means that principals spend large amounts of time inducting and training boards.
- 3.4. Further, many boards do not have the expertise to undertake principal appraisals and either do it badly, or use an external appraiser of their own choice which can leave a board none the wiser as to the true level of their principal's performance. They are also able to make decisions that impact on surrounding schools without necessarily consulting those affected.

- 3.5. Under the proposed changes principals' roles will be different. Some of the functions are proposed to move to an education hub and others, previously under the board's domain, will end up on principals' shoulders. There is likely to be mixed reactions from principals, some relishing the ability to focus more on educational matters, others mourning their lack of autonomy.
- 3.6. PPTA does not support all the elements of the proposed regional structure (hubs). While appreciating that a regional body that provides the support and coordination that the system currently lacks, is needed, we felt the model appeared too similar to District Health boards - national coherence could be compromised. In particular PPTA needs more clarity around the industrial and employment implications of the hub model, for example a clear statement regarding national collective agreements would allay some of the apprehension felt by teachers and principals.
- 3.7. We do not support principals being appointed on limited tenure.

3.8. Schooling Provision

PPTA supports the increased resourcing to support Māori education which is in line with our constitution "to affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi" and policy to "assert the central role of secondary schooling in New Zealand's education structures and that Māori medium education in Te Reo Māori me ona tikanga be an essential part".

- 3.9. PPTA also supports the goal to prioritise Pacific language options.
- 3.10. We support smooth transitions across schools types and advocate for the establishment of full-service schools with appropriate health and social support on site.
- 3.11. We support Alternative Education Centres noting that this will be welcomed by PPTA members who feel that too often they are left to cope with students whose behavioural needs are beyond anything the schools can deliver. However, we oppose the taskforce's call to break up secondary schools and replace them with middle schools and senior high schools, arguing that this would be expensive, disruptive and would severely undermine specialist delivery particularly in STEM subjects.

3.12. Competition and Choice

PPTA has consistently opposed those aspects of Tomorrow's Schools that have created winner and loser schools, inequity and racial polarisation. Consequently it supports proposals which encourage better management of the network, fair access for students with disability and learning support needs, enrolment schemes that do not deliberately exclude some students, restrictions on donations and foreign fee-paying students and assurances that integrated schools are on an even footing with other public schools.

- 3.13. The taskforce recommends that schools with international fee-paying students would have to demonstrate to the hub that they can cater for those students independently of government funding - in terms of staffing, operational and building needs. We support this idea but are aware that this may have an impact on job prospects for teachers, particularly ESOL teachers and those responsible for international students.

3.14. Disability and Learning Support

PPTA supports improved resourcing, access and coordination for special needs students. This is the area where the competitive ethos has failed completely. In 2000, the Ministry of Education

dispensed with special units and the experienced staff employed there in the belief that all schools would have to make some effort to accommodate students with additional learning needs. What happened was that the schools that had previously been magnet schools tended to remain that way but without the additional resourcing. At the same time, the tight funding was eked out by creating multiple levels of bureaucratic hoops for schools and parents to jump through to access support. It's not so much that schools don't want to be inclusive but that the funding regime makes it complex and expensive to be involved. A more effective and coordinated system is needed.

- 3.15. We support a parent's right to choose options other than full inclusion, including special needs units that support partial inclusion as appropriate, and residential special schools if they feel that is more appropriate for their child. We believe that a learning support coordinator will help students to access the support that they need in order to succeed at school.

3.16. Teaching

PPTA welcomes the prospect of a return to a national system of professional development that respects teachers' knowledge and expertise and supports them to share best practice. The adoption of a contracting system that, in many cases, eliminated local provision, was an absurdity driven by a political dislike of the university-based support services. The current PLD provision has become even more patchy, with a lot of expertise lost to the system when contracts became even more fragmented. As a result of a lack of nationally provided PLD, many schools spend considerable sums employing contractors to deliver whole school PLD which is often not in areas where teachers had identified that they needed help. We believe it is timely that the system be reoriented to better support classroom practice rather than governance, management, and administration.

- 3.17. It is disappointing that the report does not identify salaries and working conditions as a factor in building an effective teaching workforce and instead suggests strategies that plug gaps such as fast-track training for teachers and paraprofessionals. While these are not necessarily bad in themselves, PPTA is not confident that they will be delivered in a way that enhances the profession because the imperative for cheap, politically-driven solutions is so pervasive.
- 3.18. We agree with the taskforce's conclusion about appraisal, which should be a formative and useful process for teachers, but has become a narrow and negative experience, often done cursorily because of teacher workload. It is yet another example of the low-trust, compliance-based model. The vast amount of time that the process takes is unlikely to ever be justified by the outcomes.
- 3.19. PPTA is not opposed to the idea of guaranteed employment for beginning teachers but there are industrial implications. As with many aspects of the report, the employment considerations need serious work and expert input before PPTA's final position can be determined.

3.20. School leadership

Leadership is one of the most significant in-school influences on student outcomes, and has a significant impact on school culture and the workplaces of our members. Provisions to promote leadership in schools are currently inadequate. We support the need for leadership development at all levels.

- 3.21. PPTA can see the benefits of moving some tasks from the principal into the regional body to reduce principal workload, allowing them to concentrate on professional leadership. The

appointment of leadership advisors to provide support to principals in what can be a lonely job is an important acknowledgement of the challenges principals face.

3.22. Resourcing

PPTA supports an alternative to decile funding as an equity index better identifies those schools with the highest proportions of disadvantaged students. We believe that this will have direct impact on equitable provision and it is probably the first thing the minister should endeavour to put into action. However, PPTA notes that the recommendation to increase equity funding to 6% of the total pool of funding (from around 3% currently) is not actually high compared to international examples of good practice. The advice that the taskforce received on this issue shows that equity funding in overseas jurisdictions ranges from 5-15% of the total quantum of school funding. Six per cent therefore would still be at the lower end. PPTA's position is that 10% of the total amount of school funding should be equity based, and that this should not come from re-prioritised funding but through new resourcing targeted to the schools serving the most at risk learners.

3.23. Given the extensive range of problems with staffing and workload in New Zealand schools, we find it bewildering that the taskforce has chosen to debate the allocation of staffing entitlements between primary and secondary schools while ignoring issues such as class size, non-contact time, understaffing of large schools and curriculum breadth. In doing so it has failed to grasp that secondary and primary staffing formulae are different because specialist delivery requires more staff.

3.24. PPTA is not opposed to some rationalisation of the school network providing the process is fair and well-managed and the outcome is an improvement in the quality of education for students. In fact it may be preferable to have the regional body manage the opening and closing of new schools given politicians tend to have short timeframes that preclude them thinking about the long-term needs of the network.

3.25. Central Education Agencies

One of the most destructive aspects of Tomorrow's Schools was the demolition of groups that advised on curriculum. This left teachers without the curriculum support so vital for effective teaching. There is definitely a need to reconstitute a body such as the proposed Curriculum, Learning, Assessment and Pedagogy Unit to provide curriculum leadership.

3.26. PPTA supports a high trust model so believes the focus of an Education Evaluation Office on hubs providing support for student achievement and wellbeing provides the right message and incentives.

3.27. It has been PPTA policy since 1999 that ERO and NZQA should be reintegrated into the Ministry of Education, in the hope that this will allow synergies in policy development and reduction in red tape. These two bodies have been major drivers of workload for schools so teachers will be unlikely to mourn their passing.

4. PART 2 - CONCERNS

4.1. Of course a change to the system cannot cure educational inequality on its own; it will take other levers like increased taxation and redistribution of wealth. However it is clear that the current competitive autonomous structure is a contributor to the underachievement of a significant

proportion of students. While we support change there are a number of issues of concern, many but not all, arising from a lack of detail about the proposed structure.

- 4.2. In response to some of these concerns the taskforce has said that the report has been misunderstood. With regard to others it has changed its mind. What follows is a brief outline of PPTA's concerns.

4.3. National collective agreements

The report was silent on the issue of collective agreements. One of the biggest risks of hubs being the employers of teachers and principals is that instead of delegating the power to the Secretary of Education, a future government may change the law so that each individual education hub is able to negotiate its own collective agreement for the schools within its hub.

- 4.4. In response to PPTA's concerns over this matter the taskforce has made it clear that it had no intention of doing away with national collective agreements. Some PPTA members believe that the risk of this happening is no different from the government changing the law to allow site bargaining in individual schools; others disagree, expressing the opinion that in times of change it is easy for hard won terms and conditions to be eroded or changed.
- 4.5. Annual Conference needs to send a clear message to the government requiring an undertaking that national collective agreements will not be threatened by the introduction of hubs. This is Recommendation 3.
- 4.6. While we will still be subject to the whims of future governments, at least we can get an undertaking from the present government that national collective agreements will remain.

4.7. Teacher and principal terms and conditions

The taskforce proposes a move from an individual school-based model to a regional education hub model (with changes to the Ministry and oversight bodies). These new employment arrangements, which include secondments, are more complex than the current arrangements and will need careful transitions so terms and conditions are safeguarded including key entitlements to leave, medical retirement, surplus staffing, salary, and what counts as continuous service. In addition it should be made clear that principal and teacher movements should only be on the basis of agreement from all parties.

- 4.8. Recommendation 4 is that all terms and conditions of the current system are carried over into any regional structure.

4.9. Principal tenure

The taskforce's proposal that principals be appointed on 5-year contracts has received much criticism and the taskforce has done a U-turn on this issue. We no longer see this as a major risk but Recommendation 5 makes it clear that PPTA does not support this proposal.

4.10. Secondary compared to primary school staffing entitlements

PPTA believes that the different staffing arrangements for primary and secondary schools are a function of specialist subject delivery. Should staffing be rebalanced there is a risk that staffing may be taken from secondary schools (and secondary teachers) and given to primary schools. Like the impact of entrenchment, there is a risk of this having flow-on effects for future collective agreement settlements. If the government is so committed to this idea then it would have to make it clear that it was providing new funding to make this happen.

4.11. Teaching Council practising certificate and registration fees

The report recommends that the Teaching Council has an expanded function in terms of the establishment of a Leadership Centre. Unless the Council is fully funded for this initiative then registration and practising certificate fees for teachers will be increased to pay for it. Hence Recommendation 5, that if the College of Educational Leadership goes to the Teaching Council then it needs to be fully centrally funded. Of course, this could be mitigated if payment of practising certificate fees was added as a permanent term and condition in the collective agreements.

4.12. Change management and principal and teacher workload

We are aware that any change, even for the better, will be accompanied by additional workload for teachers and principals, at least in the implementation phase. PPTA needs reassurance that change will be handled carefully, and that, in addition, PPTA will have representation on the Establishment Group. We suggest a pilot be established to give insight into the change process and to help identify what roles and services will be needed in the hub. After all, the success or otherwise of the hub model is dependent on the type (and quality) of the personnel who staff it.

4.13. Lack of democratic representation on hub boards

PPTA is concerned that the governance of the regional hubs lacks transparency and accountability. This could be addressed by having some of the hub board elected by parents from within the network of schools it serves.

4.14. New complaints procedure

While it seems reasonable that the hub would establish a complaints service, there would be implications for teachers' and principals' employment and these would need to be addressed. Any new complaints process should replace, not add to, existing processes. If the complaint service sits within the hub, then dealing with an allegation against a staff member risks undermining natural justice.

- 4.15. It also raises the question of where teachers' complaints go if a principal fails to act on them. There have been occasions when teachers have had to act as whistle blowers in order to have a financial, sexual harassment or health and safety issue addressed.

4.16. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

We have some concerns about the use of KPIs as mentioned in the report because they bring to mind the recent experience with Better Public Service goals. PPTA supports a formative approach to reviewing schools and accepts that hubs will need to have a current and accurate picture of the schools it is responsible for if support is to be offered in an appropriate and timely manner. In the case of teachers' appraisal PPTA encourages ongoing, relationship-based, 'high support and high challenge' evaluation.

4.17. Transitions

The taskforce has not really acknowledged that problems at transition points are largely a by-product of the competitive funding system. The report's proposals about funding, zoning, better management of the network and increased collaboration may ameliorate some of the transition difficulties.

- 4.18. It's not clear why the report found it necessary to state a preference for middle schools, especially when it isn't accompanied by any credible research on why any particular structure might be better than another. Oddly, the report proposals don't reduce the number of transitions at all but

simply suggest moving it to a more problematic point. There is already some evidence that middle schools aren't good at keeping Year 9 and 10 students up to speed with their peers already at secondary school and releases them ill-prepared for the secondary environment at Year 11.

- 4.19. Further, the taskforce acknowledges that its proposals are unlikely to work in rural communities but is untroubled by the educational consequences of increasing the incoherence of the school system. Nor does it give any consideration of the impact on nation-wide sporting and cultural events that are reliant on a secondary school structure. The taskforce needs to properly consider the consequences of further fragmentation of the school network. If the taskforce wants to get rid of intermediate schools, the cheapest and least disruptive option is to merge them with secondary schools to form Year 7-13 schools.
- 4.20. This is another area where negative feedback has led to the taskforce backpedalling on its original proposal stating that this would be a decision for the network of schools to make sometime in the future.

4.21. More flexibility within schools

It is unclear exactly what the taskforce mean by schools being more flexible. New Zealand schools are littered with the remnants of policy developed by enthusiasts, poorly implemented and under resourced, and teachers are left trying to knit the pieces together and deal with the unintended consequences. Fresh in teachers' memories is the push for modern learning environments which was promoted by the ministry and some architects, despite the concerns first expressed by teachers and now being repeated by parents.

- 4.22. Given the workload hubs will have and the challenges in establishing working relationships, probably the last thing they need to do is dedicate time and money to speculation about the future; getting the present right will be hard enough. The key is developing a system that is able to adapt and change.

4.23. Employment-based ITE

PPTA is concerned that the taskforce sees employment-based ITE as the solution to the teacher shortage and chose not to suggest more straight forward solutions like studentships. School-based teacher education makes very significant demands on associate teachers without adequate recompense or time. Teacher workload is such that teachers are not looking for extra tasks, so providers already struggle to find sufficient associate teachers. If school-based training is to succeed, concerns about the compressed nature of the courses and the unrealistic demands on associate teachers will have to be addressed. Establishing mentoring as a career path option might be one option, as would making schools-based positions supernumerary.

4.24. The cost

Finally, a regular question at consultation meetings concerned the cost of the proposed system, whether it was affordable. The taskforce responded that Treasury was undertaking an analysis of the costs. It is possible that this will be included in the final report to the minister. It is essential that additional funds are provided in Vote Education to meet any changes: the new structure must not be established from funds diverted from teaching and learning.

5. CONCLUSION

After thirty years of the current regime, the promises made to teachers, parents, the community and students have not been delivered. The primary cause of this failure is competition, lack of system support and inequity. So, from PPTA's point of view it is imperative that there is change; however, 'any change' will not do.