



to the

Ministerial Inquiry into Novopay

16 April 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Please find enclosed the PPTA response to the questions proposed in the inquiry submission.
- 1.2. The PPTA is the union representing around 17,000 teachers in state secondary, area, manual training and intermediate schools, as well as tutors in community education institutions and principals in secondary and area schools. PPTA represents the professional and industrial interests of its members, including those working in alternative education centres and activity centres. More than 90% of eligible teachers choose to belong to the union.
- 1.3. I also **attach** for your information results of a PPTA survey into Novopay impacts on pay period 24, 2013.

2. Inquiry Questions

2.1 **Novopay Communications and stakeholder engagement**

Your views on any prior engagement you had with the Ministry of Education or communications you received from the time the Novopay project was first considered in 2003.

You may also like to comment on any communications or stakeholder engagement activity during the different phases of the project i.e. pre-implementation, go live, post go live. This may also include communications surrounding the decision to renew the payroll solution.

- i. As an original member of the Payroll Reference group, PPTA representatives found that, from the outset, there was a lack of consultation and a dismissive view taken of stakeholder input. Later on, that defaulted to a process of deliberately providing the reference group with false assurances and misleading information.
- ii. The focus seems to have been on cost effectiveness at the price of relationships. The relationships schools had with their local payroll clerks seemed to be regarded with hostility and deliberate efforts were made to break these relationships down. It was clear that there was absolutely no place for the personalised model, even though the school system in New Zealand is the most

devolved in the world and many schools, being small and isolated, need considerable support.

- iii. Communications were never timely and rarely directed to the right people. Partly this was an effect of constantly being in catch-up mode.
- iv. Over recent months, PPTA has found the assistance provided by Rebecca Elvy at the Ministry of Education both helpful and professional.

2.2 Training

Your views on the training school staff received in preparation for Novopay to go live. You may want to comment on the delivery of the training that was received.

- i. The training plan did not appear to take account of the client base. It was centralised when what was required greater regional support. It was not based on a sound understanding of what people **didn't** know.
- ii. The BETA training environment didn't replicate adequately what was required in reality and the Novopay Online Specialists were too few in number and too dispersed to be able to address the range of problems. It was the case, too that they were simply school executive officers pressed into help and provided with minimal training.
- iii. Both the preparation for the training and the training itself were underdone. It did not seem that the size of the implementation task had been grasped and when the programme fell behind timelines and became mired in errors, the training schedule fell further behind and became even less effective. The whole exercise has been an illustration of the "sin of cheapness".

2.3 Communications and the training materials provided

Was the training sufficient enough to use the system and, if not, what further training was required or what could have been done better?

- i. As above, the implementation planning never got close to embracing the reality of the client base.

2.4 Support

Your comments on the level of technical support and assistance provided to principals and school staff in the pre and post go live stages through the call centre.

NA.

2.5 Design

Your views on the design and functionality of the new system, how user friendly it is, did it cover your payroll requirements? What improvements were there over the earlier Datacom solution?

- i. Decision-makers were too glib about the impact of the removal of centrally-based pay roll expertise. It is clear with hindsight that more payroll support personnel were always going to be required given the variation in levels of school-based expertise. On the other hand, the complete inadequacy of the software suggests that no number of employed personnel could have avoided the disaster.
- ii. It is easy to see the appeal for Talent2 of a system that replaced expensive employees with software and free data entry at the school level but it is hard to understand why ministry officials couldn't see the risk in such an optimistic expectation. How has the ministry of education become so unfamiliar with the day-to-day operations of schools?
- iii. There have been no indications that schools don't want to have greater influence over payroll data and there are no signs that they want a rigid, centrally-driven system but they do want something that fairly recognises the needs, time and effort such a system requires at the school level.
- iv. PPTA has been intrigued to note the involvement of consultants at all phases of the operation from the initial proposals to the technical review. This raises the question of how culpable the consultants are. To what extent was the ministry entitled to rely on their advice?

2.6 Testing

Did your school participate in any testing?

If so, at what level and was it adequate enough?

What issues, if any, were identified during this phase?

- i. Testing was done with Ministry of Education staff not with people who would have to use the system.
- ii. There was a possibility of a trial but it wasn't done. This was reckless.

2.7 Change management

Did you receive any information in terms of what changes to expect in moving to a new payroll system?

Were there any communications about what would be different with the new payroll system and how this may affect you as a user?

- i. From the outset, PPTA representatives struggled with Talent2's negative response to requests that PPTA staff be able retain their previous direct access to authorised members' files. Talent2's insistence that copies of a teacher's file notes could only be obtained by the teacher via the school, who would then contact Talent2, was unnecessarily bureaucratic and breached the employee's privacy by requiring him/her to seek personal information via the employer. A solution would have been relatively easy to find but Talent 2 were too inflexible and too dismissive of stakeholders' concerns to be bothered trying to find one.



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