

10 April 2017

## **Education Council plans to massively increase fees**

The Education Council announced on 10 April 2017 that they are consulting on raising their fees. The increases that they are proposing are very substantial. For example, the practising certificate renewal would go from \$220 to \$510 per three year period.

While the Executive will be doing a submission on behalf of the whole membership, branches, regions and individual members should also consider doing a response because this will add weight.

The link to the consultation material is

<https://educationcouncil.org.nz/feesconsultation>

Here is some background and some ideas for responses.

1. PPTA is on record over many years arguing that initially the Teachers Council and now the Education Council should have a narrow remit that is to have high quality and efficient systems for:
  - a. issuing (and in some cases) removing practising certificates for teaching, and
  - b. dealing with teachers whose behaviour falls short of acceptable standards.

On the whole, the Teachers Council kept to this narrow remit, even though the legislation they operated under implied a wider brief, e.g. professional leadership, encouraging best teaching practice and identifying research priorities. This could possibly be explained by their having elected teachers and nominated union representatives in the majority on the Council, so they understood that the profession would not tolerate empire building by their Council. (See PPTA's 2010 Annual Conference paper on this issue, *The Teachers Council: Government Patsy or Voice of the Profession*, at <http://ppta.org.nz/dmsdocument/306>)

In contrast, all members of the Education Council are appointed by the Minister, and appear to feel no such obligation to the profession to avoid empire building. They argue in defence of the fees increase, that they have a wider brief than the Teachers Council, but in fact it is not that much wider. It still refers to leadership of the profession, best practice, and research, and the only new part is a requirement to “enhance the status of teachers and education leaders”.

2. The Education Council is interpreting its functions as requiring them to expand the “leadership of the profession” role substantially, and this consultation about fees shows the result of that, as PPTA has been predicting for some time.

In a letter to the Minister dated November 2014, the President, Angela Roberts, warned that teachers were “implacably opposed to the extra powers this undemocratic body will have to impose fees on teachers for a range of functions and activities that are unnecessary, or that duplicate work done by other bodies or that are more properly the financial responsibility of the employer.”

The Council’s consultation document refers to this on p.14, where it says “Although the Teachers Council’s purpose included enhancing the professional status of teachers... it could not charge a fee for professional leadership. The Education Council is expressly empowered to charge such a fee under s.383(1)(h) of the Education Act... In contrast, none of the other New Zealand professional regulatory bodies surveyed have the express function of providing professional leadership, and none have the power to charge a fee for the performance of such a function.”

The fee increases being proposed, while appearing to be for registration and renewal of practising certificates and LATs, are actually to cover this “professional leadership” role.

3. The fee increases being proposed in this consultation are huge. Here are some examples (all GST inclusive):
  - a. New fee for registration (as distinct from issue of a practising certificate): \$86.25
  - b. Renewal of practising certificate: \$220.80 up to \$510
  - c. Provisionally or subject to confirmation certificated teachers applying to be issued with a full practising certificate: \$302.57 up to \$610
  - d. Limited authority for three years: \$168.66 up to \$510
  - e. The Council is also consulting on annual payment of fees, but the figures are equivalent.

The Council intends to implement these changes as from 1 July 2019. This is because the government is providing the Council with funding in the interim period, “to go towards the set up and the development costs for the Council’s expanded professional leadership function but this is not intended to cover the ongoing operational cost of running this function beyond June 2019”. At 1 July 2019, the government expects teachers to pay for all the extra functions the Council has taken on.

Members should remember that the current arrangement whereby the government pays teachers' Education Council fees only lasts to the end of the existing collective agreements. This is because it was agreed through the Terms of Settlement and not through clauses in the collectives themselves. That means that to continue that payment would be a cost against any future settlements, at the expense of pay rises, and the government will be even more reluctant to pay it, knowing how high the fees are to rise.

It is important to protest now. In 2019, it will be too late.