

# PPTA News

Uniting secondary teachers of Aotearoa



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## PPTA News

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# AI challenges

Opportunities, guidelines, and guardrails for effective and equitable use of AI in education

The title of this column is taken directly from an Education International and OECD joint publication that outlines the opportunities and issues that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has in the education sector.

This was also a hot topic of discussion at the recent International Summit on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) in Singapore, with all the countries present talking about the impact of AI in education.

We can all recognise that the use of digital technologies in education holds significant promise. It has the potential to improve the quality and equity of learning, free teachers' time to focus on their teaching, and provide students with new ways of learning. But this can only happen if teachers and learners are given the right conditions to use such technologies.

What are those conditions? Well, here in Aotearoa New Zealand we do not have any guidelines or framework for how AI should be used in the classroom. We know that many teachers and schools are running headfirst into this space and are doing some amazing things already, but we also know that a lot of us are holding back and waiting to see how this all plays out.

One of the commitments that the delegation (NZEI, PPTA, and Minister Stanford) made at ISTP was to 'Develop a framework in partnership with stakeholders for the responsible and ethical use of generative AI in education'.

We will be working with the Government and NZEI to help create that framework. This mahi will be guided by what already exists, such as the Australian framework, our information communications and technology committee, and other interested groups.

**“Many teachers and schools are running headfirst into this space and are doing some amazing things already, but we also know that a lot of us are holding back and waiting to see how this all plays out.”**

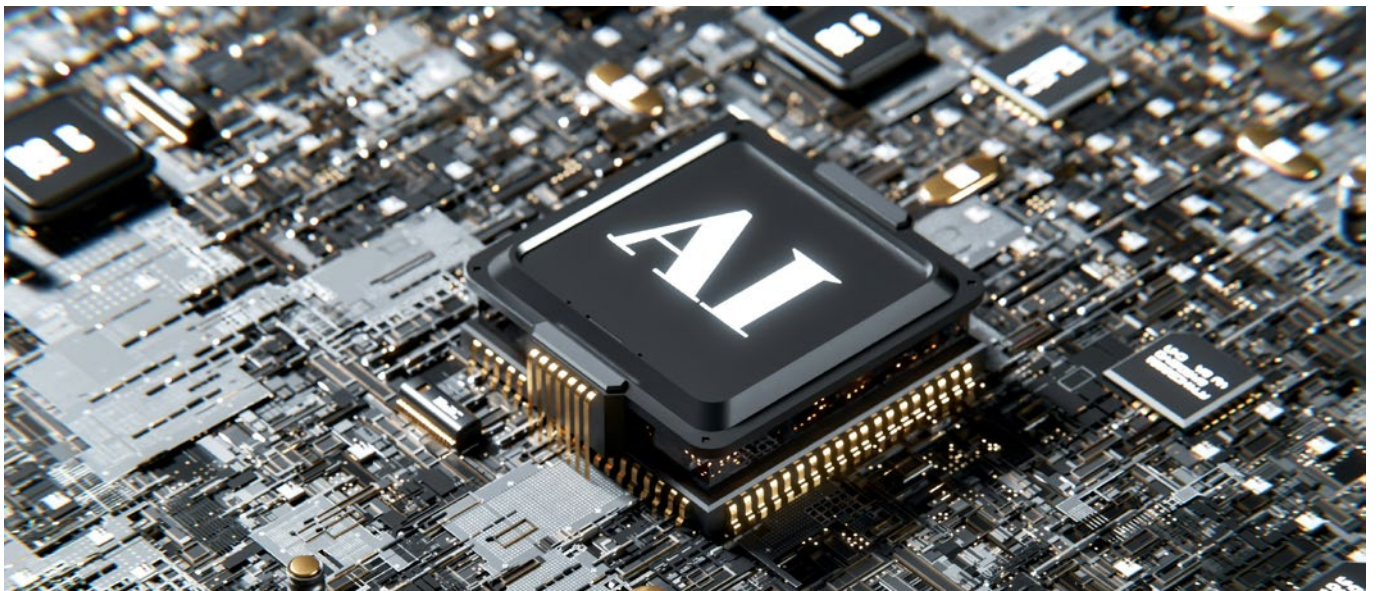
The recent United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession also clearly outlines

what needs to happen in this space to maximise the positive and minimise the negatives.

It talks about how technology is a transformative force in education that needs to be utilised, how it cannot be seen as a replacement for a teacher but an enhancement. It also talks about how teachers need autonomy on the use of technology, that both the privacy of the teacher and the student is protected, and that teachers and learners need to be creators and not just consumers.

The panel says ongoing quality professional learning and development is required that responds to the needs of both teachers and students, that governments have a responsibility to ensure policies are in place to ensure access, autonomy, and this needs to be created with the profession.

I think the most important statement in the report is this 'At no point should technology replace the human relationship with the teacher.'





# It's not what you know but how fast you can learn

The increasing development and reach of AI have huge implications for education and society according to an AI and computer science expert

The increasing development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) means that the most valuable skill emerging now is adaptability, not knowledge - that was one of the key messages from AI academic Dr Simon McCallum to PPTA Te Wehengarua regional officers at the Issues and Organising seminar earlier this year.

“Currently, assessing outputs is a measure of learning. Learning needs time and effort. Outputs need time and effort. AI breaks that relationship so outputs are fast and easy. All of the training we’ve done in how to do research - AI now does it for us and it is doing it well.”

Simon McCallum encouraged teachers to think about whether they were teaching classical musicians or DJs. “Is what we are teaching on the pathway to students’ careers or what those careers used to be?”

“The quality of an education is measured not by how much you know, but on how fast you can learn. We need to change education to focus on adaptability and learning, rather than memorisation and compliance. Fluid intelligence becomes our prime objective.”

He has observed students using AI and says there are three distinct groups. “There seems to be one group who are using it a lot to avoid learning. They are replacing the effort to learn with the effort to work out how to get AI to do the task they have been asked to do. There is another group who are not using AI because they have been told not to. Then there is another group who are using AI a lot and in interesting ways. They are not using it to replace themselves, they are using it to augment themselves. So when we assess them they are moving much much faster because they are building their learning on top of AI.”

Simon McCallum says AI has been coming for a while but society is not ready for it. “Change is now constant and the rate of change is accelerating. If AI is a five times multiplier then only 20



Simon McCallum

percent of companies need to adopt it to change an industry.”

AI is not just language models, it is coming for all our activities. Rabbit AI for instance trains a model to do actions for you. Alpha Geometry, developed by Google subsidiary DeepMind, can solve hard problems in Euclidean geometry. It achieved a silver medal in the International Mathematical Olympiad. Humanoid robots, developed by Tesla, were beginning to look more human, could take instructions in English, acted autonomously, and moved in a disturbingly human way.

“We are going to have to hold close what we value, such as strong human connections.”

Dr McCallum is currently employed by Victoria University of Wellington, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and Central Queensland University, winning teaching awards in both NZ and Norway. He has 25 years’ experience lecturing in Computer Science, AI and Computer Game Development.



# Canterbury – a piece of history

An old PPTA banner will always hold a special place in members’ hearts

A bright yellow banner adorned with an obsolete PPTA Te Wehengarua logo and a campaign slogan that is at least 20 years old, hung proudly behind the top table at the Canterbury paid union meeting last month.

“This is a really important banner for us,” says PPTA Te Wehengarua Canterbury executive member Jacinta Grice. It was up in the foyer of the Christchurch Town Hall on Monday 22 February 2011. About 700 members were in the Town Hall for a paid union meeting that was due to start at 1pm. The massive earthquake struck at 12.51pm.

Despite the widespread devastation, the Town Hall held up remarkably well and only one PUM-goer was injured, with cuts from shattered glass. Despite the shaking inside, nobody was prepared for what they saw when they stepped outside.

Jacinta said that when engineers were going back into the Town Hall to assess the damage, she asked if they could retrieve the banner but was told it would have gone.

“Sometime later, when a drone was sent into the Town Hall, the footage appeared on Facebook and I saw that our banner was still in the foyer. I contacted the council and asked if we could have our banner. This time we got it back. So it’s got a bit of a history, our banner.”





## It's all about relationships

Keeping the branch together and everyone moving in the same direction during tense industrial times makes John Dyer-Causton a worthy winner of the PPTA Te Wehengarua Guy Allan award

Negotiating corporate deals, private investigator, security guard, international teacher, unionist to the core. That's a very short summary of the working life of John Dyer Causton.

John started teaching English at Auckland Grammar School (AGS) in 2018. Pretty quickly he was drawn into the sphere of PPTA Te Wehengarua first as branch secretary and now as AGS branch chair.

In 2023, (a year of significant industrial action for PPTA Te Wehengarua members), John's priority was to keep the branch and staff together and to keep everyone moving in the same direction.

This even extended to keeping the principal in the loop about what industrial action would look like and working to create a relationship that would serve the members well.

John took an educational approach and was not afraid of taking on a difficult conversation.

John's focus was on the fact that 2023 was going to be difficult but whatever the tensions that arose a resolution would be reached eventually. After that all the staff – members and non-members – would have to live and work together.

He framed conversations positively, insisting that the industrial actions were in the interests of the school community



Lawrence Mikkelsen, national executive member for Tāmaki Makaurau eastern ward, John Dyer-Causton, Paul Stevens, Tāmaki Makaurau regional chair, and Kieran Gainsford, PPTA Te Wehengarua junior vice president at the Guy Allan award ceremony

so that the branch was not to be seen as acting against the interests of the community.

John was walking a tightrope, doing a balancing act, but he did so successfully. In 2023 PPTA Te Wehengarua membership increased to 87, well above previous membership numbers.

John continued to monitor any issues that arose within the membership. There were lots of 'quiet words' and backstage conversations with senior staff in a bid to resolve issues at the lowest level.

For John it is all about relationships, ensuring that the branch carried out the requirements of the industrial action while keeping the staff united. The

employer recognised this with a Staff Award to John at the end of 2023.

PPTA Te Wehengarua is pleased to support John Dyer-Causton as the recipient of the Guy Allan Award for Branch Activism 2023.

- Gavin Kay, PPTA Te Wehengarua Tāmaki Makaurau field officer

\* PPTA Te Wehengarua established the Guy Allan award in 2005 to recognise outstanding branch activism in the Counties-Manukau and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland regions. The award commemorates the late Guy Allan – a former PPTA branch chair and an Auckland-based field officer who was renowned for his commitment to unionism and branch activism.

## Māori Teachers' Conference 2024

Register now for the Māori Teachers' Conference, in Rotorua, Sunday 7 and Monday 8 July

"Ko au ko te Taiao, Ko te Taiao ko au"  
(In us is the world, and the world is us)  
He karanga tēnei ki ngā kaiako Māori katoa o te motu i ngā kura tuarua, ahakoa e mahi ana koe ki whea, nau mai, haere mai ki te Hui-ā-tau 29 ki te Sudima Hotel i Rotorua, 7-8 o Hōngongoi 2024.

This conference is for secondary, wharekura and area kaiako only.

Talks and workshops will focus on empowering Māori teachers and learners

with an emphasis on the environment. As well as a great line-up of keynote speakers sharing their knowledge and vision, the conference will incorporate practical workshop sessions.

Registration and food are free. Delegates need to arrange their own travel and seek funding from their Kura or PPTA region for both travel and accommodation.

Register at [www.ppta.org.nz/forms/maori-teachers-conference-2024](http://www.ppta.org.nz/forms/maori-teachers-conference-2024)





# \$153 m for charter schools

The Government is pouring \$153 million into charter schools at a time when more funding for state schools is badly needed

The Government has announced that, in line with its coalition agreement with ACT, charter schools will return next year.

This time around, there is a lot more money - \$153m - being spent to set up 15 new charter schools and enable 35 existing state schools to convert.

Associate Education Minister, David Seymour, says charter schools provide educators with greater autonomy, create diversity in New Zealand's education system, free educators from state and union interference, and raise overall educational achievement.

"They provide more options for students, reinforcing the sector's own admission that "one size" doesn't fit all."

Chris Abercrombie, PPTA Te Wehengarua president, said Mr Seymour's statement about charter schools being able to help students engage with learning differently

was gobsmacking, given the evidence that exactly these students are rejected by overseas charter schools in order to meet their targets. Nor has Mr Seymour explained what happens to the children if a charter school is closed or how the disruption to their education is managed.

**'There remains no compelling evidence that charter schools can achieve the claims being made of them'**

"When charter schools were introduced under the last National-ACT coalition there was no evidence that they improved educational outcomes despite funding each student at least six times more than state school students. There remains no compelling evidence that

charter schools can achieve the claims being made of them by the Associate Minister for Charter Schools. The fact that all but one former charter school have been re-integrated into the public school system shows there was no need for them in the first place.

"Talk to any principal or teacher and they will be able to tell you about initiatives that they are desperate for funding for, to meet the needs of the students in their schools, whether that is supporting attendance initiatives, learning support, food in schools, relationships and participation with the local community - the list goes on.

"At the very time where every cent of public money is being scrutinised, it is unbelievable that hundreds of millions of dollars are being poured into charter schools with no accountability to the public or their local communities."



This cartoon appears courtesy of Rod Emmerson and the NZ Herald

# Charter schools operate behind closed doors

Unlike publicly funded state schools, there will be very little transparency and accountability required of the next set of charter schools. recently released Cabinet papers show

**The performance measures, objectives and key accountabilities, curriculum performance standards and minimum number of roles to be held by qualified teachers will all be contained in charter schools' contracts which are not required to be available to school communities or the public.**

"The lack of transparency is extremely concerning," says Chris Abercrombie, PPTA Te Wehengarua president.

"Charter schools will not be covered by the Official Information Act like state schools are. There are no rights for any ongoing community representation as part of the governance. Once a school becomes a charter school it's a massive black hole."

State schools are required to consult with their communities to develop their school's annual report, strategic plan and annual implementation plan. These documents all must be publicly available and show how boards will meet the objectives set out in the Education and Training Act 2020. Community representation, through the school board, is mandatory.

There will be no requirements for new charter schools to consult with impacted or interested parties – such as nearby local schools.

## Overreach of Ministerial power

"Most concerning of all is that the Minister of Education will have the power to direct local schools to enter the conversion process for being a charter school based on 'government priorities' or 'based on state school performance'. This direction can happen without any input from the school board, the teachers, or the community.

"This is a completely unjustified overreach of Ministerial power, when there are already proven interventions that can be made in the state system to support schools."

There will be no requirements for new charter schools to consult with impacted or interested parties – such as nearby local schools.

There will be no requirements for consultation prior to the Minister directing that a state school enter the conversion process. It appears that there will still be the requirement for consultation as part of the conversion process.

The cabinet paper asserts there will be 'particular arrangements' in place for all staff transferring from state schools in the event of a conversion and that the legislation will have provisions for the transition of staff for converting charter schools.

## 'Once a school becomes a charter school it's a massive black hole'

### Curriculum, teaching and learning

The Cabinet papers state that charter schools can permanently appoint people without practising certificates into teacher roles, noting these will have to hold a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) under a new LAT category.

Charter school LATs would be subject to the professional disciplinary (conduct) processes of the Teaching Council but not to the competency processes, as state school LATs currently are.

There will be a certain number of qualified teachers and certain positions that are required to be qualified in the contracts - the number will not be publicly available.

Charter schools can use their own curriculum provided the tuition

standards are at least equivalent to other state schools - like for private schools - and must give access to national and/or internationally recognised qualifications framework.

They may offer full time distance education.

The sponsor has to appoint someone to be the 'chief executive' – but they don't have to be responsible for teaching and learning or hold a practising certificate. Sponsors must also ensure that a person responsible for teaching and learning is appointed who has a practising certificate and a proven background in educational leadership - this may be the same person as the chief executive.

### Issues for Māori

There will be no formal requirement to ensure that charter schools plans, policies and local curriculum reflect local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and Te Ao Māori as well as offer instruction in tikanga and te reo Māori.

The forced conversion process would exclude Kura Kaupapa Māori, and designated character schools (including Ngā Kura ā Iwi, and other Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium provision) due to their distinct settings (including in governance, property, and establishment).

More details about all aspects of charter schools will be in the legislation which is expected to be introduced to Parliament very soon.



# Charter school lessons

PPTA Te Wehengarua Māori Vice President Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie reflects on her community’s charter school experience



When charter schools were introduced to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2012, Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie, PPTA Te Wehengarua Te Hāpai-ō (Māori Vice President), became embroiled in an impassioned and often bitter battle in her rural Northland community.

More than a decade later, the pain quickly comes up to the surface. “It involved my whole being and my whole wellbeing – it was very very stressful.”

At a series of hui to discuss the establishment of a charter secondary school, which was supported by close members of her whānau, Te Aomihia argued forcefully against the proposal. “It had a significant impact on our community. Because of the close relation with the members, some of them have still not forgiven me for my input.”

### Better facilitation needed

Looking back on the experience, Te Aomihia believes the Partnership Schools Authorisation Board should have facilitated the community hui more effectively.

“When you look at the facilitation of those hui, they actually caused further division in our community. There was total confusion, mistrust of me and of others too because it was not facilitated well. If you want to build any type of school, you need to build trust from the beginning.

“And our community is so humble – my cousins, my whānau. They were not enabled to be strong decision makers at the table, as the key stakeholders, because the facilitator of those hui left a lot to be desired.”

Te Aomihia says all the kōrero at the hui revealed the complex take (issues) at the heart of the proposal. “They got people thinking about educational reforms, isolation, rural areas with high Māori populations, and priority students, many of whom were disengaged and felt let down by the current education system.



Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie, PPTA Te Wehengarua Te Hāpai-ō

“Our whānau who were wanting to set up the charter school didn’t share the negatives, only the positives. And whānau mistrusted them because they weren’t telling the whole story and then they would mistrust me because they thought I was just bringing up all the negatives because I was a mainstream teacher.”

**“The charter was going to address all of those things – that was the picture that was painted at every hui”**

### Charter school cure-all

A dominant theme of the hui was that mainstream education was not meeting the needs of priority tamariki. It lacked cultural relevance, tamariki Māori could not see themselves in the curriculum. “And the charter was going to address all of those things. That was the picture that was painted at every hui.

“Tamariki definitely deserve to have qualified teachers and they definitely deserve to have all the additional

supports to wrap around. But the charter school board could not deliver. It was hard to attract teachers and they could not deliver on the additional supports – counsellors, kaiāwhina. The charter school took on too much too quick for the hype of it all.”

In this next round of charter schools, Te Aomihia believes Māori communities will be targeted again – already Tipene St Stephen’s school in Tāmaki Mākaurau has indicated it wants to be a charter school. “High profile Māori are pushing for that and some of our members will be thinking ‘how could I ever go up against that?’ Be brave.”

She hopes communities will be properly informed this time. “Communities really need to know that this time there’s no difference in the funding per student at a charter school compared with a state school and you are not going to be entitled to all those supports in terms of care for the kids.”

Te Aomihia’s advice to members who find themselves at the heart of charter school consultations: “Have strength in yourself, don’t be scared, you might not have their flash words but you are grassroots. Kia kaha.”





# No need for charter schools

Special character schools prove that there is already plenty of flexibility and diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand’s public education system

**Stephen Walters, principal of Rangiora New Life School, a state-integrated special character school, cannot see the need for charter schools.**

“I don’t see what the problem is that they are trying to solve.”

Stephen, who is a member of PPTA Te Wehengarua Secondary Principals’ Council, believes special character schools already provide the choice that parents want and need within the state school system. “Since the early 1970s - when state-integrated schools came into formation - there has been the ability in New Zealand for a group of people in the community who have a particular ethos or philosophy to start a school that enables that special character philosophy to be given. More than 11% - 94,000 of students in New Zealand attend state-integrated special character schools.

“The way our parents expect some things to be taught in our schools is different to parental expectations in state schools. We have the freedom as an integrated school to allow our special character to be a part of all aspects of our school.”

Special character schools charge annual attendance dues- Rangiora New Life’s are about \$1000 - to cover property costs. Integrated schools are required to pay for land and buildings, which the Government does not fund. “That is the cost that parents pay to send their children to a special character school. In terms of quid pro quo it’s a good balance and people can see that seems fair. If you want to send your child to a Christian school or a Steiner school or a Catholic school, then it costs you a bit more because you’re getting extra.”

## Lack of fairness

Stephen values fairness highly - as he believes most Kiwis do. He is not happy about the fact that charter schools will be state-funded but will not have to obey state school rules.

“My understanding is they don’t have to teach the national curriculum, they don’t have to employ only registered teachers, they don’t have to pay teachers the same

rates as teachers in state schools. That’s not fair.

“And everyone in New Zealand, whoever they are, particularly children, knows when something is fair or unfair. I think it is unfair to divert money from VOTE Education to create schools based around special character when there are already special character schools within the state system. It’s unjust.

“There are good reasons why we have only registered teachers, there are good reasons why we have a national curriculum- it is not fair that children should be experimented on.”

## Inter-schools relationships crucial

Another thing that Stephen values about being in the state school system is the great working relationships with other schools. “Tomorrow’s Schools (designed to encourage choice by pitting individual schools against each other) is a distant memory and the ecosystem of education that we’re working in here in Canterbury is that kāhui ako have brought schools together to cooperate, not to compete.

“As a consequence our relationships with each other are stronger not weaker

and if I’m going to collaborate with a principal or our teachers are going to have relationships with other schools that are state or state-integrated, I think it’s really good to know that we are all on the same playing field.”

“If you’ve got a school that doesn’t have to follow the same rules, what sort of relationship will they have with other schools? The key thing about state-integrated schools is that we cannot by legislation be advantaged or disadvantaged against state schools, so state schools know this and we have a very good relationship with all of the schools in our area.

“Other schools don’t see us as taking children out of their school or zone - they just see us as different schools that provide a different learning environment for parents who have particular beliefs. All within the same system. Our teaching staff get paid exactly the same as teachers in state schools, and the amount of funding I get per student is exactly the same as in a state school.”

“We exist to provide choice and diversity in the public education system in a fair way.”



Stephen Walters



# Unlevel playing field

A charter school’s selection criteria and lack of facilities for students with diverse needs created a two-tier system of public schooling, in the experience of a United States teacher

Jeremy Foster began his teaching career in the lowest performing public high school in the district of a large city in the United States.

At the time, 2012, and still now, this city has one of the largest proportions of homeless students with about nine percent either homeless or rough sleepers. “That’s really quite staggering and a really important context for how we were affected by the charter school.

### Unfair comparisons

“One of the issues that we were up against is that we in the public school were often being compared to those in the charter school in terms of test scores, general achievement levels, things of that nature. One of the arguments that was used was that students going to this particular public high school were being pooled from the same neighbourhood as those going to the charter school so theoretically it’s the same pool of kids.

“So they were trying to say it must be something happening with our school or our teachers that’s causing the disparity in the outcomes – because it’s the same students. That’s the kind of soundbite that’s really easy to repeat in meetings and it just got repeated as a matter of fact.

“No, it is not the same pool of students, it was not a case of equal input leading to unequal output – there were a lot of mitigating factors that put us in the public school in a very different circumstance than those in the charter school.”

### Automatic filtering

As part of its application system, the charter school required applicants to have an address for receiving mail. “That’s going to automatically filter out those students who don’t have consistent addresses or are completely homeless or living in shelters or are rough sleepers. When you think about it, the students who are going to need the most support, the students who are more likely to have lower levels of achievement and academic success, it’s going to be these



Jeremy Foster

students – you can’t do your English essay if you’re not sure where you’re going to sleep that night.”

Jeremy said his school also had services and facilities, such as a teen mothers’ unit, that provided for students with more diverse needs.

“We were also the district centre for special learning needs so students who had mobility issues or special learning needs, or who needed additional support, were going to opt out of the charter school because they knew it didn’t have the resources available.

“So whether intentional or not, it became a system where the students who needed greater support, who were less likely to achieve, who needed more individualised focus – they were taken out of the charter system entirely. So it almost became a case of by default that the students who were more likely to succeed, the students who had more stable backgrounds or fewer needs to support their learning or their academic success – those were the ones who were able to go to the charter school. It was one hundred percent not a level playing field. Whereas the whole idea of a public educator is that it is, or at least it aspires to be, an equal playing field for every child.”

### Charter schools not the fix

He has concerns about the possibility, with charter schools this time around in New Zealand, of state schools that are deemed to be ‘failing’ being forced to convert to a charter school. “My issue with this comes from treating the charter system as a guaranteed ‘fix by default’ where really what we should be looking at is if a school is deemed to be failing, whatever the criteria, what specifically is not happening?

“You can provide support and solutions without needing to exacerbate this two-tiered system which I think would lead to further inequities in our education landscape here in New Zealand. Do they need smaller classes? Let’s see what we can do to give the school the resources and support to decrease their class sizes.

“Are some teachers not equipped to handle some of the new challenges coming through? Well then where is the PLD and the resources from the Ministry to help those teachers to upskill?

“There are many other approaches that could be employed without switching to a charter system in which, by looking at how other countries have been impacted by them, we see that the benefits don’t outweigh the costs and drawbacks.”

# Standing for public education

PPTA Te Wehengarua is campaigning for a fully funded public education system with qualified and registered teachers in front of every student – here's how you can get involved!



## On your socials

Amplify pro-public education content. Keep up-to-date with the PPTA instagram @nzppta for shareable tiles and reels. Create content to support the campaign.

## In your branch

Proactive lobbying school boards as a branch. Discuss the reasons to remain a fully public school and discuss with parents at school events.



## In your community

Host pro-public school conversation in your communities. Stalls at public events attending wānanga and hui.

## In your electorate

Lobby your local MP at local events or request meetings. Encourage them to make a public statement supporting public education.



**Keep an eye on our website, the PPTA News and the Collective News to find out about events happening in your area, and how to access resources and support for your local activities**



## Paid union meetings

**PPTA Te Wehengarua members throughout the motu attended paid union meetings to affirm the union’s position on charter schools and Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

Chris Abercrombie, PPTA Te Wehengarua president, said outside of collective agreement negotiations paid union meetings were held when there were government proposals that would affect members, the teaching profession, schools or ākonga.

“The focus of these meetings was about how we as a profession respond to the Government’s proposals to channel money out of public education and into charter schools, and how we as a union will continue to develop our constitutional objective to affirm and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

“There has been a glaring lack of consultation and information, from both the Ministry and the Ministers of Education on how charter schools will work, despite repeated requests for details through official information requests and face-to-face meetings.”

Ironically, in the first week that the PUMs were held, the Government announced that \$153 million would be allocated in the May 30 budget for the establishment of 15 new charter schools

and the conversion of 35 state schools to charter schools.

Chris Abercrombie said charter schools were a hugely expensive and unproven experiment, when they were last introduced back in 2014. Funded totally by public money, they can be run by whoever wants to run them, they are not required to be transparent or accountable, they can use untrained and unqualified staff as teachers and they’re not required to teach the national curriculum. The fact that all the charter schools – bar one – were able to be reintegrated successfully back into the state school system demonstrates there was no need for them in the first place.

“We are seriously concerned this time around about existing schools being converted to charter schools, and the Education Minister’s ability to direct local schools to enter the conversion process based on ‘government priorities’ or ‘state school performance’. There are significant implications for children and young people’s access to their local school, teachers’ terms and conditions

of work, redundancy costs, property issues and much more. Every school community has a right to know what is being planned.”

The PUMs also focused on Te Tiriti and how it could be advanced and affirmed, as per the PPTA Te Wehengarua constitution.

Chris Abercrombie said the Government seemed to be narrowly focused on literacy and numeracy at the expense of other valuable aspects of education such as mātauranga Māori. “We are concerned about the effect of Government policies and decisions on Māori student achievement, and its responsibilities under Te Tiriti.

“Some of the Government’s policies and directives seem to be undermining the important work that is being done in schools towards improving educational outcomes for ākonga Māori.”

The recommendations to the meetings were supported by members. Additional resolutions passed by particular regions will be passed on to PPTA Te Wehengarua national executive for their consideration.



## Pasifika Fono 2024

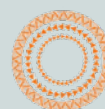
**Strength in Unity is the theme of the PPTA Te Wehengarua Pasifika Fono in Tāmaki Makaurau July 10-11**

**Pasifika teachers and teachers of Pasifika ākonga – we hope to see you all at the Pasifika Fono!**

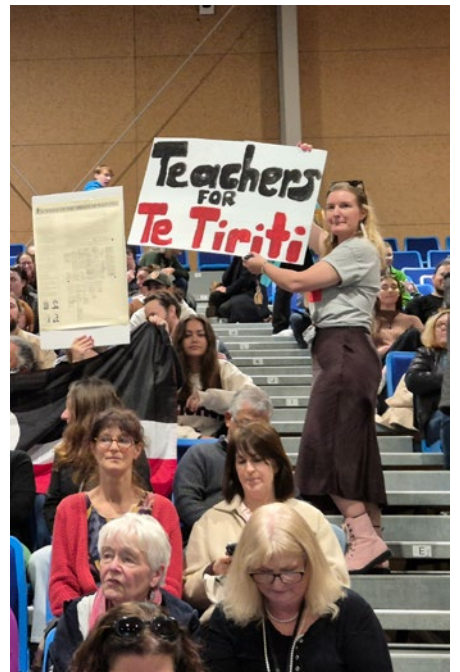
The Fono takes place over two days in the July break – July 10th and 11 2024. This year we are back in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland at the Sudima Auckland Airport Hotel.

PPTA Te Wehengarua is fully funding the cost of registration for the Fono for our members, but we do not cover the cost of travel or accommodation.

Register now to secure your spot - we are limited to 150 places. <https://www.ppta.org.nz/forms/ppta-pasifika-fono-strength-in-unity/>



**STRENGTH IN UNITY**  
PPTA PASIFIKA FONQ | JULY 2024



## Review of NCEA online assessment platform complete

Recommendations of an independent review of the NCEA online assessment platform need to be actioned as soon as possible

An independent review of the online NCEA assessment platform has made 17 technical, organisational and system recommendations to the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

The report investigated why the online system failed on several occasions between 30 October and 10 November. It compared the failures to a Swiss cheese - multiple holes in different parts of the system lined up at the same time.

It said there were problems with the Assessment Master online platform itself, inadequate pre-testing, and a defect that multiplied each log-in which placed significant strain on the database.

The report said the problems were the last straw for tired teachers and created fears of a repeat this year.

Kate Gainsford, Chair of the Secondary Principals' Council, says the recommendations need to be implemented urgently to ensure schools' confidence in the system. "As the report notes, last year's events were very stressful for everyone involved, especially the students. It is reasonable to expect fast lessons will have been learned and steps taken to make sure the technology and related systems work without issue this year. Whatever it takes to restore our



Kate Gainsford

trust in the system, it must be done."

Chris Abercrombie, PPTA Te Wehengarua president, said teachers welcomed the review's recommendations to provide more support for Principal's Nominees (PNs). "We are really proud of how all the principal's nominees responded to the problems with exams last year. They did amazing work under intense pressure, stepping up to ensure that those students affected were assisted as quickly and effectively as possible."

Chris Abercrombie reiterated the call for more funding for the Qualifications Authority to ensure it had all the systems and safeguards in place for future exams. "We can have either good assessment or cheap assessment - we can't have both."

Lisa White, president of the National Association of Deputy and Associate Principals (NASDAP), says PNs' workloads have increased substantially over recent years, especially considering the implementation of digital NCEA examinations and other external assessment, such as co-requisites and reports to be uploaded.

"New systems and styles of exams have had to be catered for, including the training of examination centre managers and supervisors in these various aspects. Some schools support the PN role with an additional administration position, however these costs are absorbed by schools' own budgets and means that their operational grants are spent on this rather than supporting students and staff elsewhere. Others expect the PN to do their own administrative tasks, as they do not have the funds to allocate to support the administrative tasks.

"NASDAP would appreciate a full review of the PN's role by NZQA and appropriate resourcing of time and remuneration appropriate for this changed role as soon as possible, so that it is recognised for what the role requires of a school to lead effective and quality assured qualifications."

 Representatives

## New president and senior vice president

The handing over of the PPTA Te Wehengarua presidency took place at the I & O seminar earlier this year

Chris Abercrombie was 'cloaked' with the PPTA Te Wehengarua korowai, in a ceremony to formally hand over the office of president to him, at the Issues and Organising (I & O) seminar earlier this year.

Chris began his official term as president this year, having been acting president last year. During the pōwhiri at the I & O seminar, Melanie Webber, senior vice president, was given a pounamu pendant as a token of members' aroha and gratitude for her relentlessly amazing work as president in 2021 and 2022. Kia kaha Melanie and Chris.



PPTA Te Wehengarua senior vice president Melanie Webber and president Chris Abercrombie



# Your new national executive members

Continuing with our series introducing new PPTA Te Wehengarua national executive members, meet four of them

PPTA Te Wehengarua national executive is the Association’s governing body, made up of members – everyday working secondary teachers – from the 24 regions throughout the motu, and Māori and Pasifika teacher representatives. Here are four of the new members for 2024.



**Faith Tautuhi (aka Koka), Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake**

Ko Hikurangi te maunga  
Ko Waiapu te awa  
Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi  
Ko Kapohanga-ā-Rangi, Taumata-O-Tāpuhi me Tū auau ngā ingoa o ōku marae  
Ko Te Awemāpara, Te Aitanga-a-Mate, Ko Ngati Rangi ngā ingoa o ōku hapū  
Ko Faith Tautuhi tōku ingoa.

Faith is currently HOD Kaupapa Māori, TIC Te Reo Māori, Year 13 Dean and PPTA Te Wehengarua branch chair at Waikato Diocesan School for Girls.

“I joined PPTA back in the rā (day) as the women’s rep for our region, then as Te Reo a Rohe and now as Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake representative. Having grown into these roles and often in isolation, I understand that one of the greatest key issues for all kaiako, particularly our kaiako Māori, is workload.”

Faith says being an executive member challenges her to find her voice within, to ensure members’ voices are heard at the table. “Connecting with our members and understanding each need in order to support better outcomes, is a key priority for me.”



**Karl Goddard, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland western ward**

Workload and cost of living are the key issues for teachers in west Auckland, Karl Goddard believes, and he is sure it is the same for teachers throughout the motu. “I know a number of teachers with side-hustles to help them save enough for a house deposit or provide

for their families, and it really makes me angry that as teachers we don’t earn enough to be able to live comfortably – I know this is true for many other industries as well.”

Karl, who is head of History at Massey High School, says he is also interested in looking for ways that PPTA Te Wehengarua can support teachers who battle chronic illnesses and find it difficult to maintain the frenetic work life teachers lead.

His first goal as an executive member is just to find his feet and figure out how everything works. “I see myself as a grass-roots member, I’ve not been involved beyond the branch level so there’s a lot for me to learn, but it also means that I am looking at things with new eyes which is always good in any organisation.”



**Carl Rushton, Taranaki**

Most teachers know that PPTA Te Wehengarua will support them if something goes wrong, but there’s a lot more to the union than that, says Carl Rushton, assistant head of Mathematics at New Plymouth Boys’ High School.

He would love to see more members engaging with PPTA and becoming aware of the breadth of the work that the union does. He says a lot of members do not know everything they are entitled to under their collective agreement, let alone how much advocacy is done on their behalf to influence and improve the direction of education.

As a new executive member Carl says he is enjoying the robust discussions. “Things don’t just get pushed through – there’s a lot of debate around the issues which is really good.”

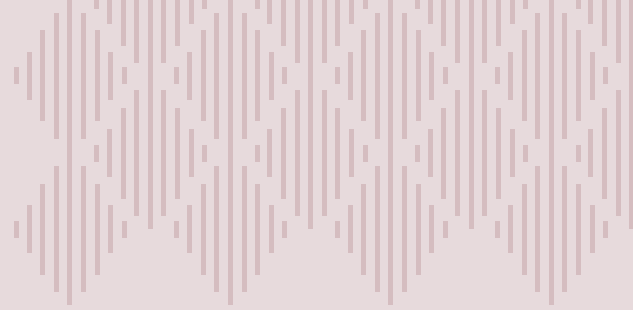


**Cameron Stewart, Wellington and Marlborough**

The key challenge for Cameron Stewart as an executive member right now is to learn the role so he can advocate the best he can for Wellington and Marlborough. However, he believes the executive itself is also facing some significant challenges.

“Obviously the charter schools issue is going to be a real struggle for us - we’ve seen from our comrades in the UK how pervasive it can be if it is not challenged as strongly as it could have been. I’m really pleased we’re coming in strongly to advocate for a much better public education system where all of our students’ needs are catered for.”

Cameron, a social sciences and music teacher who is currently TIC Social Studies at Onslow College, says pay equity is also a crucial issue. “Because of the historic makeup of our workforce we really have been underpaid for far far too long and we can see the ramifications of this with fewer specialists in our classrooms and our younger teachers are looking at a career across the ditch where they can earn up to \$40,000 more from the moment they get off the plane.”



# Creating climate change resources

Talk was followed by action at the inaugural PPTA Te Wehengarua TEACH conference

The horrific impacts of climate change on Pacific peoples inspired the inaugural Teachers' Environmental Action Conference /Hui (TEACH) event, held in Wellington at the end of the Term 2 break.

About 30 educators from around the motu took part in the hui. On the first day participants received presentations from keynote speakers, climate leaders and education experts who shared about emerging and next best practice in climate education.

Speakers included Rachel Bolstad, a Kaihautū Rangahau Chief Researcher at the New Zealand Council of Educational Research. Rachel's current work programme includes leading a research project to explore systemic educational responses to climate change. She has previously led several research projects on environmental education and education for sustainability.

Hui participants spent the second day creating examples of activities and lesson resources, putting their knowledge gained on the previous day into action. It is hoped that these resources will be collated and made available for all schools, kura and early childhood providers in Aotearoa, and will later be translated and shared with colleagues across the Pacific.

Michael Draper, a Physics and Technology teacher at Wa Ora Montessori senior school, said the highlight of the hui for him was the shared inspiration. "That sense of 'hey, there's a body of people working on this, not feeling like it's just me trying to push my way slowly through the swamp."

"Climate change is seen as massively depressing – students are fearful, adults are fearful and part of what's missing is the 'here's what you do to cope'. We can actually predict the sorts of changes that we're going to have to deal with and acknowledging that's the case and here's how we get through them, how we deal with them, is an important part."

The particular resource that Michael's group worked on was how to deal with

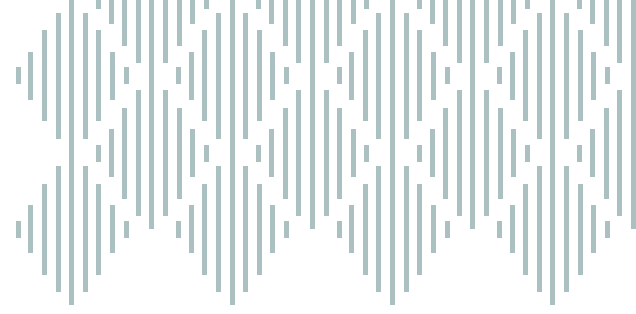


food changes. "So it was around setting up raised garden beds to which irrigation could be attached that would be capable of surviving floods, and that would still work through droughts. A lot more material needs to be added but that was the basis of it.

"If we give this to schools it becomes a resource that they and their whānau can go to work on. I don't think schools realise that their ground-level garden beds are prone to erosion and flood damage and they don't have deep soil so they're very drought-prone."







# Insecure employment – when it is not lawful

Schools are legally obliged to appoint teachers to permanent positions unless there are genuine reasons for the position not to be permanent

Emma was offered a job as a Physics teacher on a fixed term basis for one year. The stated reason for the position being fixed term, was roll uncertainty. Emma was disappointed as she was wanting to buy her first home and the bank would not approve a mortgage unless she was permanently employed.

As it happened, things worked out for Emma who was offered a permanent position at another school, which she accepted.

This situation however got Emma thinking and researching about fixed term employment and what it meant for her and others. Emma discovered that there is a legal obligation on schools to appoint teachers to permanent positions unless there are *genuine reasons based on a limited number of reasonable grounds* for the position to not be permanent. The roll uncertainty reason that Emma had been given for the fixed term job was vague and probably spurious, she thought.

## Financial uncertainty no grounds for fixed term

Would the stated reason of roll uncertainty have met the legal requirement of being a genuine reason based on reasonable grounds? In seeking to answer this question, Emma discovered an Employment Court case called *Morgan v Transit Coachlines Wairarapa Limited* that is relevant to her situation. Mr Morgan was a bus driver doing school runs. He was employed by Transit Coachlines on a fixed term basis year after year on the basis of uncertainty of ongoing Ministry funding. Mr Morgan wanted to have his position made permanent. The Court found that Mr Morgan should be permanently employed. The Court said that the reasons Transit Coachlines had given Mr Morgan, around uncertainty of funding, was speculative and not grounds to make an employee fixed term.

Sam also read in the Morgan case that financial uncertainty of itself is not a reason for an employer making any



position fixed term, otherwise virtually every job could lawfully be a fixed-term one, which was plainly not the intention of Parliament when it passed the legislation.

## Need for greater explanation and scrutiny

Emma realised that the reason of possible roll fluctuation that she had been given by the school was not a valid reason.

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

## It's okay to query fixed term positions

This issue is important in maintaining a stable teaching workforce and in upholding the rights of individual

teachers. Teachers employed on a fixed term basis lack security in their employment. It can also have ramifications around teacher registration, and there are some provisions in the secondary and area school teachers' collective agreements that are not available to fixed term teachers, for example accessing maternity leave and study awards.

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

There is more detailed advice about genuine reason for fixed term appointments on the PPTA Te Wehengarua website.

# Bruce Kirkham – obituary

**Bruce Kirkham was a long serving, trusted and competent advocate for teachers and PPTA Te Wehengarua, writes Vernon Tile**

With Bruce Kirkham's passing earlier this year, PPTA Te Wehengarua has lost a long serving and resolute union leader, activist, and member, while the New Zealand teaching profession has lost a valued teaching colleague.

In his career of more than 30 years, Bruce was an involved and active union member in both schools he taught at -Wellington East Girls' College and Newlands College.

Bruce's abilities as a trusted and competent advocate for teachers and PPTA Te Wehengarua were confirmed by Wellington and Marlborough members' continual support, over two decades, of Bruce to be their regional chairperson and then their national executive member until he retired from teaching. He was PPTA Te Wehengarua Wellington regional chair on two occasions from 1994-1995 and from 2006-2007. Bruce was the executive member for Wellington/Marlborough from 1996-January 2003 and May 2004-2005.

Bruce had also been at times the only Association counsellor for the PPTA Te Wehengarua Wellington region – a position he held from 1992 until he retired in 2008. From 1996 to 2008, Bruce



Bruce Kirkham

was also one of the few surplus staffing (teacher redundancy) nominees in the PPTA Wellington region.

Even after retirement, Bruce maintained his union membership and continued working on behalf of members as the PPTA Te Wehengarua representative on the union's health insurance organisation, the Education Benevolent Society Board.

Bruce always encouraged and mentored members to be involved more actively in the Association. He provided solid, steadfast and inspirational leadership, as well as building up a collegial collective

leadership team approach for the Wellington and Marlborough regions. This stood members in good stead during some difficult professional, industrial and political fights during the 1990's and into the 2000's – battles around the introduction of the Employment Relations Act; fighting to maintain a collective agreement for secondary school teachers; improving teachers' pay and conditions; and opposing bulk-funding.

In 2014, Bruce received a PPTA service award– it was justly and rightly deserved.

As Bruce's family and colleagues are fully aware, teaching is a demanding job, and it intrudes into family life in many ways. Yet Bruce found it vitally important to still be involved in his union both professionally as a teacher and as a trade union activist. PPTA Te Wehengarua unreservedly thanks Bruce's family – especially Susan and his daughters – for sharing Bruce with us. Our kind thoughts, deepest sympathy and best regards to you from PPTA Te Wehengarua at this time.

\*Vernon Tile is PPTA Te Wehengarua Wellington regional treasurer and a former national executive member.

## New wellbeing app

**A new EAP Services app makes it easier to book appointments with counsellors or other professionals when you're pressed for time**

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP services) has produced a new app that you can use to book an appointment with a counsellor or other professional and access support and advice.

habithealth+ also works like a 'pocket health coach' for you - supporting your mental and physical health. It helps you manage things like exercise, nutrition, stress and sleep in particular.

With habithealth+, you can choose health journeys to embark on. You will be supported with personalised recommendations and educational content to help achieve your health goals.

You can easily download the app and get it going within minutes. habithealth+ doesn't require a code to log in and it's accessible by everyone.

With habithealth+, you can:

- Manage your health on the move
- Book with a counsellor or other professional
- Access support and advice

The new **habithealth+** app is available to download.

Support your workplace wellbeing today!



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eapservices



# Sharing tech success

**Burnside High School teachers are sharing their innovative online resource to enable teachers across Aotearoa New Zealand to teach digital technologies effectively**

A group of teachers from Burnside High have developed an online resource – Techquity – to support both tech-specific teachers and those teachers who find themselves leading a subject outside their area of specialisation.

“This was the driving force behind it; that it could be accessed anywhere by anyone at any time,” says John Creighton, head of technology.

Techquity is a comprehensive online resource teaching full programmes for all Year 9 and Year 10 digital technology and electronics courses. There are also courses for some Year 11–13 subjects including computer science and programming, electronics and product design.

The website is entirely free to use and totally accessible; made by teachers for teachers.

“Burnside High School has a strong technology department. On a team of 21 teachers, there’s a software engineer, a graphic designer, a web designer, an electronic engineer, a network engineer and a games developer, all sharing these skills in a teaching capacity.

Putting their brains together, they began to craft the online resource to distribute content aimed to better their students.

“For example, if the student was away, they could still access the learning from home. If they were working fast, they could move into the next topic or another area of interest. Or they could learn the subject at their own pace,” says John.

The teachers saw the potential of the resource and decided to officially turn it into an online textbook with resources, assessment tasks, exercises and supportive videos.

“Absolutely anyone can pick up the resource and teach it, even if they’re a maths or science teacher that’s been tapped on the shoulder to help for the day. If a school doesn’t have a digital technology teacher, there’s still that option for the students who want to study the subject.”



The Burnside High teachers who created Techquity, l-r Steven Rodkiss, Katana Dunn, Steve Dunford, Toni Maddaford, William Thew, John Creighton, Samuel O’Sullivan. Absent: Carol Veatupu Photo - Jade Street

## Collective effort

The resource was a team effort created in conjunction with the Digital Technologies Teachers Aotearoa subject association with NEX funding. Computer scientist and Canterbury University professor Tim Bell also contributed advice and resources.

“Techquity is just the tip of the iceberg. Underneath are all the incredible people who helped create it,” says John.

Techquity was made on an open-source Google platform.

“Its design works as drag and drop so no hardcore HTML and CSS wizardry is going on behind the scenes, rather it’s a simple way we can upload and change content relatively easily.”

It just took “five unbelievably passionate teachers who put hours and hours of their time into getting the system up and running.”

The team went through several iterations of the resource; the first worked for Burnside students and the next versions were created to work for other schools.

Teachers across the motu have been using the resource in its entirety or incorporating it into their own school programmes.

“People can’t believe the generosity of the teachers and the hours they’ve put in to create this resource,” says John.

## Designed for all students

John says the end goal is for every student in Aotearoa New Zealand to have access to quality technology programmes.

“We want there to be programmes that will enable students to carry on with their career in digital technologies or in a career that uses digital technologies – which is almost everything.”

He hopes that Techquity will be able to help students go beyond learning basic digital technology skills, branching out into computer science, electronic concepts and programming fundamentals, even at an early age.

To find out more, visit [techquity.co.nz](http://techquity.co.nz)

*This article first appeared in the Education Gazette May 2024*



## PPTA Membership Alert

# Have your details changed?

Changed schools? New email address? New phone number? Let us know! We have important information to share but can only get it to you if we know how to find you. If your contact details have changed, please let us know.

### You can update your details online!

All you need to do is visit [ppta.org.nz](http://ppta.org.nz), and look for the log-in button at the top right of the page. Once logged in, you will be taken to the membership dashboard where you can update your details by selecting the 'view profile' tab.

If you have any difficulty logging in, just email [webmaster@ppta.org.nz](mailto:webmaster@ppta.org.nz).

### Have any PPTA membership questions?

If you would like 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](mailto:membership@ppta.org.nz) or phone 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](http://ppta.org.nz) and search 'leaving teaching'.

If you have any questions about the survey please contact Rob Willetts – [rwilletts@ppta.org.nz](mailto:rwilletts@ppta.org.nz)

