

PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

TE WEHENGARUA

www.ppta.org.nz

SUBMISSION

to the

Ministry of Education's Review:
Technology Provision for Year 7 and 8 Students in
Greater Christchurch

Vision and Proposals

14 March 2014

1. Introduction

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. As well as endorsing the points made in the submission from the Canterbury Manual teachers I want to add some comments on the funding and staffing aspects of the proposal. One of things that was abundantly clear in the survey was how much the students enjoy their technology classes. Care should be taken about making changes that suit the agenda of the adults but put quality provision at risk for the students.
- 1.3. Funding and staffing implications
PPTA has major concerns about the proposal that “schools should have more flexibility to change provider if they wish”. There is an very big back story here that has been left out of the narrative, perhaps deliberately or, more likely, because once again there has been too much reliance on the views of primary principals who represent only the interests of their own schools not the broader interests of the community of schools and all the students and teachers in that community.
- 1.4. In 1994, when the MRG staffing model was introduced it was accompanied by a virtually identical proposal - that technology provision should be treated like a market and schools should be consumers shopping around with no concern for the effect on the wider community. This proved to be a disaster because a single school making a self-interested decision to put its children in another centre could the cause the collapse of one of the subjects (say food) and in some parts of New Zealand the complete loss of the specialist centre. This is why the memoranda of understandings were developed so that the choices of one school were not allowed to override the choices of all the other schools in an area.
- 1.5. The vision must make the point that a decision by one school can harm the interests of students in a number of surrounding schools. Currently there is a certain naivety about the likely impact of the so called “flexibility to change provider” Once this

taxpayer-funded and sustained resource is lost to the community of schools it will not come back, as many New Zealand communities have found out the hard way.

- 1.6. In this context, asking the schools to fund any redundancy costs is perfectly consistent with their employment responsibilities. If they knowingly make decisions that result in the disestablishment of permanent positions, who do they think should pay?
- 1.7. The proposal to permit schools to opt in and out of providers contains many fishhooks so presenting it in the report as an unproblematic issue is neither accurate nor honest. It must be accompanied by a section that outlines the financial costs and the risks to the continued provision specialist technology if the current managed system is replaced with a free-for-all. It should also note the extent to which this proposal is at odds with the government's new initiative *Investing in Educational Success* which is trying to encourage schools to actively collaborate for the benefit of all students in the community rather than the present practice of caring only about the students in a particular school. The current model of technology delivery, as a partnership between schools, is rare example of collaboration in the sector and should not be lightly dispensed with.
- 1.8. It also needs to be borne in mind how expensive technology is. It's all very well for survey respondents to say they want to see more electronics but that is an expensive option. That is also why the economies of scale of setting up the resources all in one place should be retained. It is not as if the ministry intends to provide 3D printers for every primary school that wants to have a go at teaching technology. The students will get an impoverished experience (straws, scissors, paper and hot glue guns) if the subject reverts to generalist provision. It would probably be wise for the ministry to consult secondary school technology teachers for views on how useful this sort of preparation is for students who want to specialise in technology at year 11. It's my understanding that it would not be considered to provide satisfactory grounding in the subject.
- 1.9. Lastly I'm not sure you should say you consulted with PPTA. I'd prefer you said, more accurately, that "PPTA expressed concerns that the questionnaire contained a number of leading questions and consequently the conclusions may not be particularly valid." Having seen the conclusions and proposals I think our concerns have been

realised. The survey has given undue weight to the views of a small group of principals who have not taken account of any of the wider issues.