



## **Teachers Council – dangerous waters ahead**

*4 June 2013*

Last year the government had the Teachers Council reviewed. They sat on the report for months, and now there's to be a further consultation about some issues.

### **The process**

The Minister has appointed a new Advisory Group, led by Graham Stoop from ERO, to lead this consultation. They're all principals or academics. There is a discussion document highlighting the aspects being consulted on. Other recommendations of the original review group have either been adopted, deferred or rejected – see Cabinet paper.

All the information (Review Committee report, Cabinet paper, discussion document, and an online submission form) can be found at

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/Consultation/NZTCReviewProposals.aspx>.

An analysis comparing the three key documents and PPTA policy decisions from annual conferences between 2000 and 2010 is also attached with this message.

### **PPTA submissions needed**

Branches need to make submissions, but there isn't much time. Submissions close at the end of this term, on 14 July.

PPTA thinks this is disrespectful of the teaching profession. It doesn't provide enough time for busy teachers to engage with the issues and make their responses. Eight weeks demonstrates a prioritising of the government's legislative agenda over the principles of good faith consultation. Even if that's the only point you make, it would be worth making.

Much has been made of the low turnouts (14%) in elections for the teacher positions on the Teachers Council. If branches don't respond to this consultation, this will be read as further evidence that the profession needs to be "led" by a body handpicked by the minister of education to do her bidding.

Please get together and work on a submission, and/or do one as an individual. The online form is easy and quick to use, and you only need to make a few points to be counted as showing interest.

## Ideas for key points

Here are some suggestions for key points that could be made:

- The government says it wants a Teachers Council that can “provide professional leadership”, but they don’t define it anywhere in the documents.

Leadership of the teaching profession is currently shared across a number of groups, for example the teacher unions, subject associations, professional leaders in their schools and communities, the current Teachers Council, the Ministry of Education, and individual teachers.

There’s nothing wrong with this sharing of leadership, it works well. But what the government really seems to mean by professional leadership, and we know this from secret documents we have obtained under the Official Information Act, is actually auditing and control of teachers including performance pay.

- The various documents talk of “transforming” the council into a professional body that is “owned by its members”, ie by the teaching profession. If that is the goal, then the following requirements need to be met:
  - The council must become an independent statutory authority, not a crown entity, because this will increase its ability to publicly interrogate and challenge government policy.
  - The right of certain groups within the sector, such as the teacher unions, to nominate members of the council and to have those nominations accepted by the minister, must be retained, given that teachers are the ones expected to fund the work of the council and to be led by it.
  - If teachers are to continue to fund the body, and the discussion document floats the idea of the fees going up, then its membership should reflect the whole teaching profession, not just principals and employers – what the papers call “people with successful governance experience”. The knowledge and skills for governance and leadership can be found among practising teachers who are not principals.
  - The council must retain a strong majority of teacher members, while recognising that the presence of some non-teaching members has been valuable over the years.
  - The current size of the council, at 11 members, must be retained or increased in order to ensure an adequate breadth of knowledge and experience.
  - The government must not dilute the principle of teaching as a trained and qualified profession, eg through the government’s proposal to create a

person-specific “Authority to Educate” instead of the current position-specific and time-specific Limited Authority to Teach.

- The government would have to spend a lot more on Vote Education to pursue the two ideas floated with regard to renewal of practising certificates, ie training and accreditation of those who sign off practising certificates and a requirement to complete a certain quantum of professional development. This is a low-trust approach and would be inordinately expensive. Teachers certainly shouldn't be asked to fund it.