



STANDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



‘PPTA Te Wehengarua supports a fully funded public education system’ says President Chris Abercrombie

We have a large variety of schools already in the New Zealand system which, compared to other countries, is *already* highly devolved.

“We’ve got huge flexibility that already exists within the system. We’ve got state, we’ve got state-integrated, we’ve got special character, we’ve got religious... we’ve got alternative education, we’ve got private schools, we’ve got single-sex, co-ed, we’ve got small, large, urban, rural”.

Abercrombie said the focus should be on public education through which the vast majority of students received their education.

“Building up our public school system, funding it properly, having qualified registered teachers in front of every young person and having subject specialists, that should be our focus, not getting public money to private individuals to run schools as they see fit.”

This booklet was first presented to the *Issues & Organising Conference 2024 Charter Schools Workshop*. It is available to download on our website ppta.org.nz/campaigns and will be updated regularly.

What *is* a Charter School ?

Charter schools are state-funded schools that are run independently of the government by non-profits or businesses.

Previously these schools catered primarily to “priority learners” – those who had historically been underserved by our education system.

This included many Māori and Pasifika students, and those with special learning needs.

The official explanation for wanting to see charter schools in Aotearoa New Zealand is to improve outcomes for priority learners by allowing innovation, and supposedly encourage underperforming state schools to improve in a ‘competitive market’.

Competition has no place in a public education system. We need more collaboration, not less. We also do not see any evidence – internationally or locally – for charter schools improving the public system. In fact, outcomes for students in charter schools are not usually any better than their peers in public schools.

Charter schools will supposedly have more flexibility to set their own curriculum, hours of operation, and assessment models. Internationally, very few schools change the school day to anything other than a slight variation of 9am – 3pm.

Charter schools are not required to employ teachers under the terms and conditions of the collective agreements that are negotiated between teachers and the Ministry of Education. This means that teachers will have to negotiate their employment contract directly with their employer.

Proponents of charter schools have said that the competitive model may see salaries for workers in charter schools ‘go up’ as they vie for the ‘best’ ‘teachers’ and keep them through ‘performance pay’. Professional educators know that no learner is educated in isolation. Schools are ecosystems. No ONE teacher is the answer for everyone and no ONE measure is an indictator of success.



Why does PPTA Te Wehengarua Oppose Charter Schools?

It's Who We Are

- We are the kaitiaki | guardians of public education
- We have a long standing opposition to privatisation and neo-liberal reform agenda in education
- We are member driven, with robust democratic structures

Specific Objections

- Charter schools shift resources from the public to the private sector
- There is a lack of transparency in Charters which is expected with public funding and spending
- Charter schools undermine the professionalism of teachers
- Charter schools undermine the connection between schools and communities
- Charter schools have an impact on the overall school network
- Charter schools have had inadequate evaluation and Health and Safety processes in the past
- Charter schools are politically rather than educationally driven
- Charter schools have profit motives

PPTA believes that all students in Aotearoa New Zealand must be guaranteed a **high quality education at their local state school**. Charter schools operate as private businesses, are bulk funded and operate under commercial contracts. The scheme is designed to privatise the public education system.



Education and Training Amendment Bill 2024

The Bill was introduced to the House in June of this year and the Education and Workforce Select Committee was soon open to hear submissions.

The original deadline, just two weeks after the first announcement, was met with protest from both PPTA and NZEI as well as opposition MPs. The deadline (originally in Week 2 of the July school break) was extended another week but this was then extended again due to late amendments to the Amendment Bill.

You can find our full submission on our website and you can also watch video of submissions from our Junior Vice President Kieran Gainsford, Māori Vice President Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie and Chair of the Secondary Principals' Council, Kate Gainsford.

The Bill is due back in the House by September 5th, 2024. With the use of urgency, it is likely to be fast-tracked through the legislation process in time for schools to open for Term 1 2025.

It is of concern to us that this Bill was hastily drafted (exemplified by the late amendments to the Amendment Bill). We know from various governmental department reports that the drafters of this Bill ignored expert advice and went against multiple recommendations.

It was clear too, that the majority of the submissions were against the passing of this Bill, with potential sponsors being the only submitters who spoke in favour.



JVP Kieran Gainsford speaks on the PPTA Te Wehengarua submission



MVP Te Aomihia Taua-Glassie speaks on the Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake submission.



Chair of SPC Kate Gainsford speaks on the Secondary Principals' Council submission.

International Experiences

There are three countries who have experimented with charter schools. England, the USA and Sweden.

In Sweden, the 'Free Schools' or *friskolor* as they were known, were labelled a "failure" by the Swedish Minister of Education, Lotta Edholm in November 2023.



"A report by Sweden's biggest teachers' union, Sveriges Lärare, warned in June of the negative consequences of having become one of the world's most marketised school systems, including the viewing of pupils and students as customers and a lack of resources resulting in increased dissatisfaction." – Guardian, September 2023

In the USA, charter schools were invented to create the system we have had in Aotearoa New Zealand since 'Tomorrow's Schools'.

Charter schools are able to employ untrained teachers in both leadership and classroom positions. We know that these untrained 'teachers' often require high levels of support, putting a strain on both their wellbeing, and that of any trained teachers employed in the school.

These charter schools also have a high turnover of staff, who often have to work excessive hours in order to meet the expectations of the school sponsor/owner.

In England where 80% of secondary schools are charter schools – also known as academies – communities were sold an idea of autonomous, flexible, very distinct and unique schools. The reality is that many of these schools have now been taken over by bigger and bigger national chains without any strong connections with those communities.

A brief history of PPTA Te Wehengarua Opposition to Charter Schools

Did you know that all PPTA Te Wehengarua policy is member-led? Annual Conference is where all policy is debated and voted on by our delegates who represent all of the regions around the motu. Our members have consistently said 'no, thank you' to charter schools.

In 2005, a conference paper* **Threats to Public Education** reaffirmed PPTA Te Wehengarua's opposition to the threats to the public education system of: the bulk funding of salaries, the privatisation of state schools, the introduction of the competitive school model, site or individual contracts

The 2010 PPTA Te Wehengarua annual conference opposed PPPs (public private partnerships) in the "absence of evidence that they provide long-term cost savings...efficiency, or innovation". The paper **Private Profiteering or Public Private Partnerships** also noted that the concept of partnership in this case was a misnomer, as it was not the "warm relationship between equals...but an exploitative relationship whereby the public purse is raided by privateers bent on extracting profit".

Annual Conference in 2013 took a "brave and unequivocal stand" against charter schools, determining not to "do anything to assist charter schools".

The 2015 report **Charter Schools: An Update** provided a summary of "the failure of the charter school experiment to provide an improved alternative to the public education system in New Zealand".



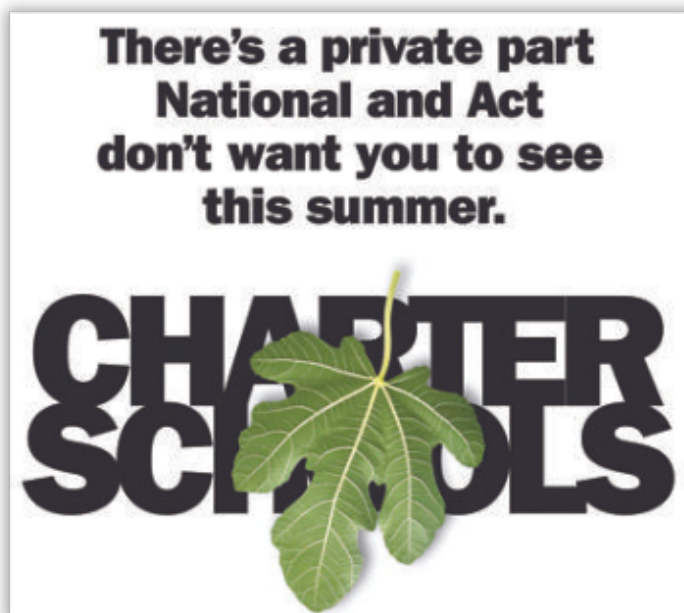
**All of these conference papers are available on our website under the Charter Schools Campaign Tab*

It's not just about the policy though – *he tangata, he tangata, he tangata*. It is about the people.

Vocal and consistent opposition to these schools by PPTA Te Wehengarua involved a lot of hard work for many of our members, particularly in Te Tai Tokerau, where Māori communities were targeted by proponents of charter schools. Some of our members found themselves eye-to-eye with their own whānau, and it was a difficult fight for many. We owe these members our gratitude.

As a result of our members' mahi, charter schools were restricted to just eleven nationally, with just over 1400 students enrolled. Keeping them small meant that when the Labour/ New Zealand First government was elected in 2017, they were able to follow through on their election promise – to abolish charter schools.

All of the charter schools, except for one, successfully integrated into the state system after that, proving they never needed their special status in the first place.



Previous PPTA campaign materials opposing Charter Schools. Previous campaigns focused on Charter schools as an import from overseas that are ultimately aimed to privatise the public education system, opening it up for profit-making motives.



What's going to happen this time?

A new departmental agency has been established – The Charter School Agency – which will oversee the implementation and operations of the charter school model. They will contract organisations to provide support to charter schools and acting as a 'matchmaker' for potential sponsors and schools as well as providing establishment and ongoing support.

Once the legislation is passed, the Authorisation Board will continue until the Establishment Board is appointed.

New Charter Schools

The funding allows for 15 *new* schools in the first two years. We know that there are multiple international businesses who are interested in establishing themselves in the 'New Zealand market' and we are yet to see what impact this will have on the current school network in the areas where they situate themselves.

Converted State Schools

Our submission was clear – we are extremely concerned about the 35 funded state school conversions. Not only can sponsors seek to set up a new school as a business, but they can also look to 'take over' a current state school.

Members' jobs at risk

This poses an even bigger risk to our members than the last time charter schools were introduced in 2014 because it would mean some of our members may find themselves teaching in a charter school against their will.

Members' jobs will be protected in the short term – the Bill provides for the transfer of staff to Individual Employment Agreements that are [mostly] "no less favourable" than their current employment agreements. For members this will be either the STCA or ASTCA. Unfortunately not all terms and conditions *can* be transferred as some are specific to the state system. Charter School sponsors are also likely to want to transfer their staff into a new agreement as soon as possible.

Students who are taken from the rolls of state schools also take away funding that goes to that school, leading to a possible loss of funding for teacher aides, learning support, and more.

Our campaign

We aren't waiting for the legislation before we start taking action. There are many tactics and angles that we are addressing this threat. Our campaign will adapt and adjust as more information comes through, and we will work together support our communities and schools addressing the threat of charters.

PPTA members – generally and locally

- Teachers and principals are the best advocates for our issues
- Ensure members are well informed
- The 'ban' on supporting charters still stands – both symbolic & practical
- Local activism
- Social media campaign and tools for members

Party politics– government & opposition

- We will be putting pressure on the government – consistently a 'friendly voice'
- We will also be continuing our advocacy with opposition parties

Policy makers

- We will engage constantly with agencies such as the MoE and Treasury
- Use of the Official Information Act to find out as much as possible
- Continue to be credible experts in the field of education

Education sector

- We will continue to work with other education unions, standing on common ground, sharing information and resources
- This ensures that multiple voices are giving the same message

Media & public

- We will continue to be credible experts in the field of education, sought out for our opinions
- We will shine a light, challenging mistruths
- Demonstrate the strengths and flexibility of the public system



What can you do?



On your socials

- Amplify pro-public education content.
- Share your own stories with your perspective and experience throughout the campaign.
- Tag @nzppta and use #StandingForPublicEducation



In your community

- Have conversations to answer questions and dispel mis- and dis-information.
- Consider hosting a forum for your community with support from the PPTA.
- Stalls at public events, attending wānanga and hui



In your branch

- Pass the Resolution Against Charter Conversion
- Be pro-active in conversations with your school board and leadership about conversion.
- Map out your activist network to ensure key allies are informed and on board.



In your electorate

- Lobby your local MP at local events or request meetings.
- Share your submission on the charter schools legislation.
- Encourage them to make a public statement supporting public education.

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

What do we want to see in our public education system?

PPTA Te Wehengarua is committed to a strong and fully-resourced **public** education system.

What if your school is targeted to convert to a charter school?

We understand that some schools around the motu have already been visited and approached. The Associate Minister of Education has been having conversations with principals and boards regarding a conversion to charter school status.

This is an attempt to introduce bulk funding by stealth, something that our members fought off in the 1990s. Bulk funding will inevitably lead to cuts in co-curricular and result in larger class sizes as principals try and balance the books.

Our action toolkit will be available soon. This is aimed to support our members whose schools are considering converting to charter status.

Access our Branch Charter Resolution Toolkit

Scan the QR Code or use the link on our campaigns page if you think your school is in line to be targeted. You can also contact your Field Officer or email public.education@ppta.org.nz for advice and support. PPTA Te Wehengarua staff will be available to assist school branches if they are facing conversion, or simply want to know more.





FREE Community Film Screenings

PRESENTED BY PPTA TE WEHENGARUA



A FILM EXPLORING THE REAL COST OF PRIVATIZING AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BACKPACK FULL OF CASH

NARRATED BY MATT DAMON



Showing online or at a venue near you!

Check out our website for details ppta.org.nz/events