STANDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

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.

'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.

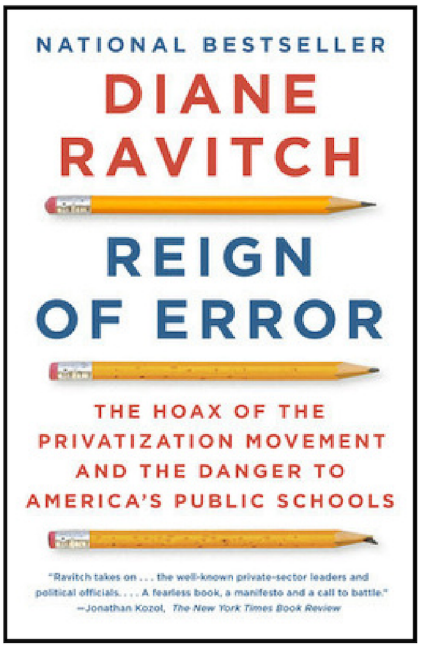
"Building up our public school system, funding it properly, having qualified registered teachers in front of every young person and having subject specialists, that should be our focus, not getting public money to private individuals to run schools as they see fit."

"We know what works. What works are the very opportunities that advantaged families provide for their children. In homes with adequate resources, children get advantages that enable them to arrive in school healthy and ready to learn.

Discerning, affluent parents demand schools with full curricula, experienced staffs, rich programmes in the arts, libraries, well-maintained campuses, and small classes. As a society, we must do whatever is necessary to extend the same advantages to children who do not have them.

Doing so will improve their ability to learn, enhance their chances for a good life, and strengthen our society."

Dianne Ravitch, Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatisation Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools (2013)



While every attempt has been made to ensure all information in this booklet is correct, we cannot guarantee that this booklet will not become 'out of date'.

Please check our website for the latest version as the content will change.

ppta.org.nz/campaigns

What *is a* Charter School?

These state-funded schools are run independently of the government by non-profits or businesses and previously catered primarily to "priority learners" - those who had historically struggled more. This included many Māori and Pasifika students, and those with additional learning needs like neurodiversity. However, we know that ACT is wanting to expand the charter school experiment outside of these priority groups.

In the USA, where charter schools were invented, there is a lot of top-down and onerous red tape that public schools have to work with. In Aotearoa New Zealand, with our self-governing schools, we already have high levels of whānau, parent and community input into how our schools are run. The only reason to import this experiment into our context is to provide money-making opportunities for unscrupulous businesses and to 'break the unions'.

Internationally, charter schools are able to employ untrained teachers in both leadership and classroom positions. International evidence is 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.

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'.

We do not believe competition has any place in a public education system. 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.

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, thankyou' 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".

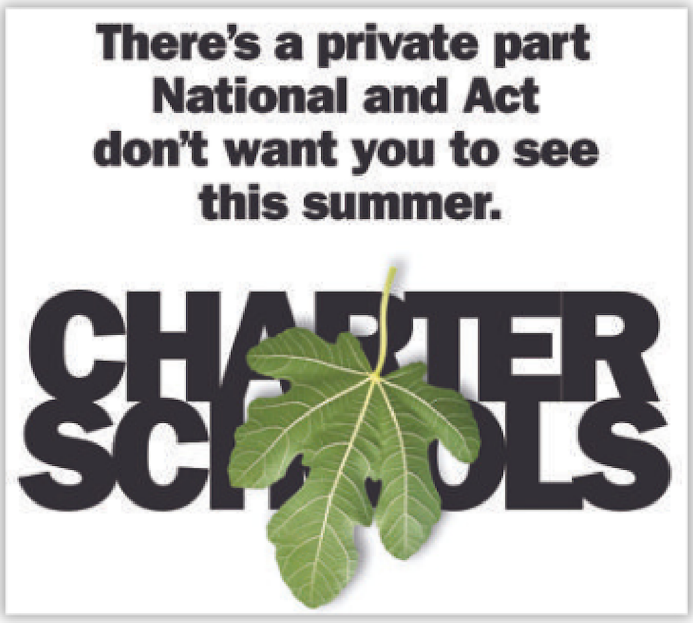
**All of these conference papers are available on our website under the Charter Schools Campaign Tab*

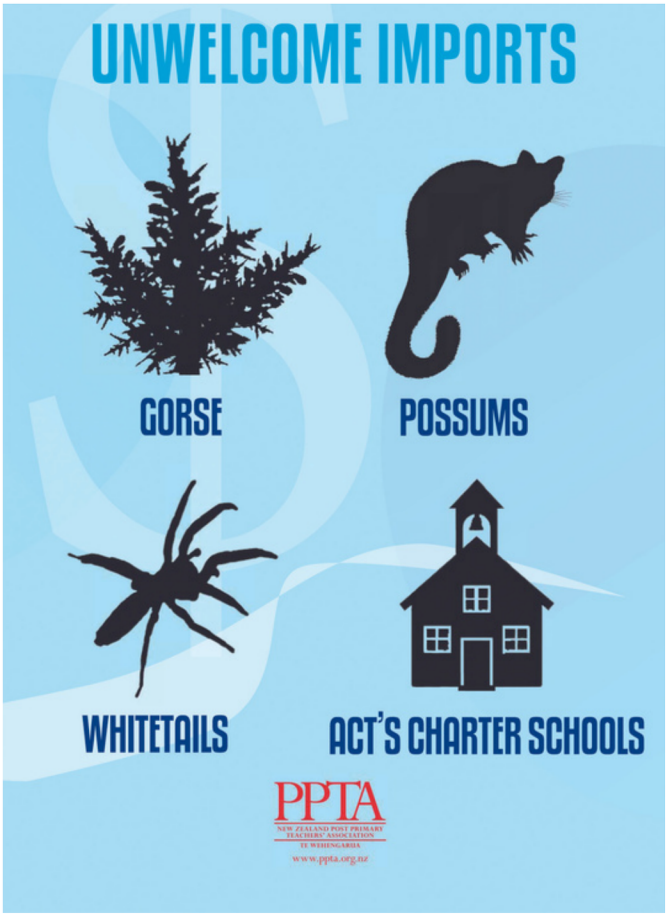
It's not just about the policy though - *he tangata, he tangata, he tangata*. It is about the people.

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.

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.

What's likely to happen this time?

Our response to a new round of charter schools will focus on the positive aspects of the state school system and to continue to show why charter schools are not needed.

The announcement of the Charter School Establishment Board confirmed fears of 'conversion' of state schools to charter schools

"I hope and intend to see many new charter schools opening, and state and state-integrated schools converting to become charter schools," Seymour said, when he announced the board.

Members' jobs at risk

This poses an even bigger risk than the last time charter schools were introduced in 2014 because it would mean PPTA Te Wehengarua will have members in charter schools. Members may need to join a different union such as ISEA NZ.

Members' jobs will be at risk as converted schools won't have guaranteed funding for teaching roles.

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.

Māori and Pasifika likely to be targeted again

It seems likely that, as happened when charter schools were introduced in 2014, Māori and Pasifika will be targeted again. This demonstrates the "rank hypocrisy" of the ACT party calling their charter schools 'partnerships' while in the same breath calling for a referendum to effectively abolish the partnership principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We know that ākonga Māori need better outcomes; we need to fully and equitably fund our public education system and resource our innovative professionals to make those changes - alongside iwi Māori and our school communities.

Grassroots, branch-based campaigns will be needed to enlist the support of parents and put pressure on boards of trustees, similar to the campaigns against the bulk funding of salaries fought by branches in the 1990s.

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

So, what to do now?

A paper presented at 2023 Annual Conference, **Charter Schools and Privatisation**, called on the PPTA to remain steadfast in our opposition to charter schools, and to oppose the conversion of existing schools.

Recommendations sought for the PPTA to advocate for increased flexibility to allow for innovative approaches to education within the state and state-integrated school system.

The recommendations in full are:

1.That the paper be received.

2.That PPTA Te Wehengarua continues its implacable opposition to the establishment of new charter schools (or te kura hourua, partnership schools or whatever they may be called), and the conversion of state or state-integrated schools to charter schools.

3.That PPTA Te Wehengarua advocates for increased flexibility to allow for innovative approaches within the state and state-integrated school system.

4.That PPTA Te Wehengarua affirms its support for an equitable and well-resourced public education system.

You can access this conference paper and find further information on the PPTA website through the 'Campaigns' tab - ppta.org.nz/campaigns

Make sure you are signed up to receive the toolkit (info on the next page), and keep an eye out for a campaign workshop in your area.

Have conversations with your friends and family, colleagues and others in your school community. Keep these light, and revisit them if you need.

Attend your local regional meetings to hear more and have your say.

What can you do?

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

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?

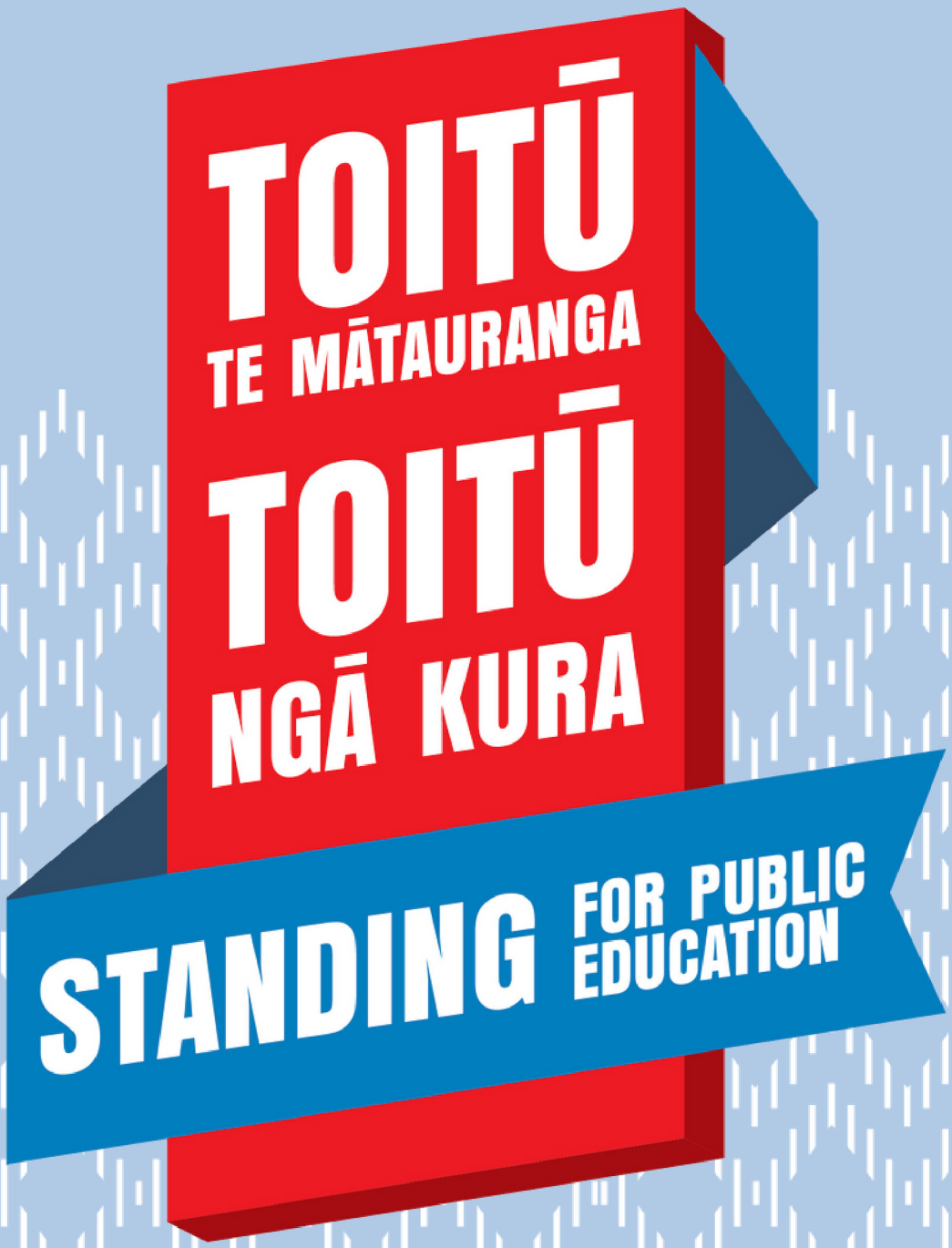
We understand that some schools around the motu have already been visited and approached. The Associate Minister of Education has been having conversations with principals and boards regarding a conversion to charter school status.

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 very soon after the legislation is announced. This is aimed to support our members whose schools are considering converting to charter status.

Pre-register for our Charter Conversion 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.



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