



NZPPTA Submission to the
Workload Working Group

August 2016

1 About PPTA

- 1.1. PPTA represents approximately 17,500 secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers in New Zealand; this is the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education.
- 1.2. Under our constitution, all PPTA activity is guided by the following objectives:
 - To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular.
 - To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively.
 - To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.
- 1.3. The Association wishes to make the following submission to the Workload Working Group on behalf of those members.

2 The secondary teacher workload problem

- 2.1 Teaching is both a demanding and fulfilling job. The teaching day is long and the work requires a high level of emotional and intellectual effort. On the other hand working with students in ways which are seen to have positive outcomes on their lives is one of the intrinsic ways in which teaching can be highly rewarding.
- 2.2 The NZCER 2106 report¹ indicates that amongst their sample of secondary teachers in 2015 69% said their satisfaction was good or very good². At the same time secondary teachers have been increasingly expressing concerns about, and dissatisfaction with, their total workload. There is, however, no disparity between these two facts. The NZCER report also identifies a number of barriers to making changes to or maintaining the quality of the curriculum they teach areas; the most frequently reported of these being the workload being too heavy, a lack of time for collaborative planning and the requirements of NCEA.
- 2.3 When secondary teachers raise issues about their workload they are not complaining about working hard, rather they are referring to excessive demands and unproductive tasks which form an increasingly larger component of their workload. They are frustrated at those factors which they see as either interfering with their ability to perform effectively the core teaching and leadership functions they value or which require them to work extensive hours in order to be able to maintain the same level of effectiveness in their core work with students.

¹ *Secondary schools in 2015: Findings from the NZCER national survey*. NZCER 2016

² Note that the NZCER sample is over-representative of senior leaders.

When members talk about reasons they are choosing to leave teaching the responses are often prefaced with a variation of 'I still love teaching but...' The follow-through is generally an expression of frustration that something has come to outweigh the satisfaction that they had been getting from teaching and working with students.

3 PPTA Secondary Teacher Workload Taskforce

- 3.1 In 2015, in response to increasing calls from members for industrial claims to address concerns about the escalation in unnecessary and unproductive workload components the PPTA Executive established a Workload Taskforce to look generally at the underlying causes of secondary teachers' concerns and a Middle Leadership Taskforce to look more in depth at the issues for those in these roles. The purpose of the Taskforce was to identify what the underlying causes of the expressed concerns were and how these underlying issues could most effectively be responded to.

The full report of the taskforce is available at

[PPTA Workload Taskforce report](#) (pdf)

<http://ppta.org.nz/advice-and-issues/teacher-workload/>

- 3.2 The Workload Taskforce confirmed that teachers are not expressing concerns about their teaching and leadership duties, but rather that they are frustrated and angry about a number of factors which are preventing them from fulfilling those duties as they would wish to.
- 3.3 The Taskforce found that teachers at all levels were reporting that the teaching tasks have increased in both complexity and quantum over the last five years. However, their concerns were not about the increased complexity of the teaching tasks. Rather the main areas concerns being expressed were about:
1. NCEA processes and administration (though not NCEA itself)
 2. School management and administration practices
 3. The lack of time and people to manage the sheer volume of work expected
 4. The excessive compliance and accountability requirements
 5. A stream of poorly managed and poorly resourced initiatives.
- 3.4 Teachers at the classroom and middle leadership level reported that they spent a high proportion of their time in tasks they considered to be productive. These were classroom teaching, resource development and preparation for teaching. These are, essentially, the core functions of the role.
- 3.5 The teachers also indicated that they spent a lot of time on general administration, NCEA administration and school-driven initiatives. They regarded each of these as

being generally unproductive work in respect to teaching and learning. There were other tasks that are felt to be largely unproductive, but which do not take fill so much of teachers' workload.

4 Impacts of unproductive workload pressures

- 4.1 A number of consequences of overloading teachers with unproductive tasks are identified in the report. These include negative impacts on the quality of:
- Teaching
 - Marking and preparation
 - Personal health
 - Performance of management/leadership duties
 - Work-life balance
- 4.2 A number of teachers indicated to the Taskforce that the effects of being overloaded with unproductive work were a cause of them considering or deciding to leave teaching.
- 4.3 This echoes the findings of the Supply Working Group which reported comments from principals on the impacts of workload in their ability to recruit and retain secondary teachers.
- 4.4 The Workload Taskforce identified workload pressures across all levels of the teaching workforce, but noted that the level at which pressure is greatest is amongst middle leadership. The reasons for this the role of middle leadership is increasingly complex and increasingly loaded with administrative tasks, usually on top of an almost full classroom teaching load.
- 4.5 Again, this echoes the Supply Working Group report in observing that principals see the middle leadership positions as amongst the hardest for schools to fill. It points to the clear relationship between recruitment and retention difficulty and the workload expectations on middle leaders.
- 4.6 Two other groups of teachers with particular high demands over and above those placed on classroom teachers in general were kaiako Maori and Pasikifa teachers.
- 4.7 The Taskforce also identified particular workload pressures for senior leaders and for principals, beginning teachers, part time teachers and others.

5 PPTA Middle Leadership Taskforce

- 5.1 PPTA has a Taskforce currently investigating more broadly the middle leadership role. While the report of that taskforce is still some months away some relevant preliminary findings in relation to middle leadership will be presented to the Workload Working Group separately.

6 PPTA's aspirations for the Working Party process

6.1 The Association is hopeful that the Workload Working Party will engage with the issues of secondary teacher workload and identify a range of practical and meaningful responses. The agreed responses could be implemented in the short to medium term to:

- i) collectively address the concerns of teachers and principals and allow teachers to teach effectively,
- ii) allow leaders to lead effectively, and
- iii) support the healthy recruitment and retention of both.

6.2 We would anticipate agreement on responses that not only recognise and address the workload problems common across classroom teacher and middle leaders but also respond to those which are specific to groups like kaiako Maori, Pasikifa teachers and senior leaders.

6.3 The nature of the responses from members to the Taskforce suggests that effective solutions will be about advice, guidance and support of best practice, changes in policies and expectations of government agencies, improved support for teachers and leaders, and changes to the employment conditions of teachers.