

<b>To</b>	<b>Executive [Membership committee]</b>	<b>HX20/030</b>
	<b>Te Huarahi</b>	<b>Strategic Plan Ref: Policy, Advocacy, Voice</b>
		<b>30 April 2020</b>
<b>From</b>	<b>Susan Haugh, Advisory Officer</b>	

### Recommendations:

1. That the report be received.
2. That, in the event that the Teaching Council proceeds with unacceptable fee increases Executive calls on branches to hold meetings on Wednesday July 1st to consider a vote of no confidence in the Teaching Council.
3. That this action should be postponed in the event that not all regions in the country have returned to COVID-19 alert level 2 or lower by July 1<sup>st</sup> 2020.

## **Paying to watch the bouncer dance – responding to the Teaching Council’s proposed fee increase**

### Summary

The Paid Union Meetings held in late February/early March have given approval for Exec to take further steps in opposing the proposed Teaching Council’s fee increases should they go ahead. This paper recommends that these next steps give effect to members concerns regarding the Teaching Council by calling on branches to hold meetings to take a vote of no-confidence in the Teaching Council.

### Background

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, the Teaching Council notified teachers via email that they were proposing a fee increase to take effect from July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. They sought consultation on two possible fees increases. The current fees are \$220.80 every three years for all teachers. The proposed increase would be to either \$470 for all teachers, or \$300 for recent graduates and \$500 for all other teachers. It stated that current fees, which have not increased in 10 years, only cover around 40% of the Council’s costs, and noted that the government funding which provided the rest of the money would end on June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. The consultation mechanism was via online survey, which was available until the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. <sup>1</sup>

In this email they also linked to the full consultation document, which stated that “*fees will be subject to an annual increase of 2.3% per annum to offset the cost of inflation.*”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Have your say on proposed fee increases”, email from Teaching Council, January 28th 2020.

<sup>2</sup> “Consultation on proposed changes to Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand fees”

28 January 2020, <https://teachingcouncil.nz/sites/default/files/2020%20Fees%20Consultation%5B1%5D.pdf>.

This caused considerable distress for teachers:

- Both the proposed options represented an increase of 125% to most teachers.
- The timing of this email meant that it arrived in the midst of the busy start-up period of the year, on what was for many teachers their first day back at school.
- The consultation only included two options that were very similar, and the timeframe only allowed until February 21st which indicated that real, meaningful consultation was not sought.

The timeframe also did not allow for regional Paid Union Meetings to be organised in response to these concerns. Exec instead authorised branch-based Paid Union Meetings. Given the minimum required 14-day notice period, these were initially planned between February 17<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. PPTA sought and was granted an extension to the submission date to March 13<sup>th</sup> for its members.

These Paid Union Meetings allowed members time to discuss the issues, make submissions to the Teaching Council, and to vote on four questions:

1. Do you support the two options for fee increases put forward by Teaching Council?
2. Are there alternatives to increasing Teaching Council fees?
3. Who should pay the Teaching Council fees?
4. In the event that the Teaching Council implements its proposed fee increase, do you approve the PPTA executive to implement next steps?

It also provided the opportunity for written feedback to be collected and returned to PPTA National Office. Full voting results and a summary of the feedback were sent to Exec via HI20-022. From this feedback it is clear that teachers oppose the proposed Teaching Council fee increases, and believe there are other avenues to funding the Teaching Council, particularly if the Council is to undertake costs such as the Centre for Leadership Excellence which they consider to be outside their remit.

Exec is authorised to take further non-industrial action to oppose the fees increases if they go ahead.

The Teaching Council reported on March 17<sup>th</sup> that they had received over 24,000 submissions and would be analysing the results and considering the feedback over the following two months.<sup>3</sup>

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, Michael Stevenson and Liam Rutherford of NZEI sent a joint letter to Minister Hipkins requesting interim measures and changes to the consultation process be put in place due to the current COVID-19 crisis, based on the feedback gathered at the Paid Union Meetings. As yet we have not received any response to this letter.

We cannot yet be certain what the Teaching Council's response to the submissions will be, and we do not know if any of the requests put to Minister Hipkins will be addressed.

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<sup>3</sup> "Matatū March: speaking up and out for teachers" Email from Teaching Council, March 17<sup>th</sup>.

However, we must be prepared to take next steps if the proposed increases, or similarly unacceptable increases, are set to come into place on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Discussion

PPTA had strong objections to the way in which the Council was formed in 2014. There was already a clear understanding that teachers considered the proper role of the Council to be limited to initial teacher training and registration, the issuing of practising certificates, and managing competency and conduct processes. Including provision of professional leadership and enhancing the professional status of teachers were already seen to be well outside the Councils' remit: *"It is ludicrous to expect a registration body, whose job is a public interest one to ensure the safety of students, to be able to have an effect on the status of teaching or to have the role of leading the profession."*<sup>4</sup>

These same concerns were raised in this year's branch-based PUMs in regard to the proposed fees increases. Teachers generally continue to support the need for a body to register and certificate teachers, and for there to be a disciplinary body to keep standards high and students safe. They are not opposed to paying a reasonable amount to cover the costs of these core functions.

However, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the Teaching Council as it stands. They do not believe the Teaching Council benefits them, and they feel there is not sufficient transparency in how the Council is spending its money. They do not consider the Council to be an appropriate location for professional learning, and in particular do not wish to fund a Centre for Leadership Excellence.

It was of some dismay to teachers, having put forward these concerns in submissions to the Teaching Council, to see on March 17<sup>th</sup> the cheerful headline: "Leadership Centre - we accept!" in their monthly newsletter. Given that they have not yet made any response to the submissions, it casts even further doubt over whether the consultation is genuine.<sup>5</sup>

Our challenge is to maintain momentum in this campaign at a time when it may no longer be considered a top priority, and where public reaction to opposing a fee of \$125 per year may be negative. Notwithstanding how deeply these concerns were felt, this feedback was gathered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Teaching Council fees increase may not hold the same urgency and priority that it did, now that teachers are facing significant health and safety concerns, as well as navigating the inequities and workload issues of distance learning. There is also the public perception that most teachers have retained their jobs at full pay during this time, whilst other workers have lost their jobs or suffered significant pay cuts, and many more are likely to.

Balanced against this is the experience of our relief teachers, many of whom fall into the higher risk health categories, and for whom there is now less work. Now more than ever an increase in certification fees may see their exit from the profession.

In light of the PUMs feedback, and the extraordinary situation of a global pandemic, we are recommending that next steps focus on opposing the expansion of the Teaching Council beyond its remit, rather than opposing paying any fees at all. It is the "empire building" into professional development that is causing the dramatic increase in required

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<sup>4</sup> PPTA's submission to the 2014 Education Amendment Act.

<sup>5</sup> "Matatū March: speaking up and out for teachers" Email from Teaching Council, March 17th.

funding, and this expansion is deeply unpopular with secondary teachers. To paraphrase Michael Stevenson: teachers understand the need of there to be a bouncer at the door to the profession, but they don't want to pay to see the bouncer dance.<sup>6</sup>

## **Options**

Many branches gave their preferred option for next steps as a boycott of Teaching Council fees, either fully or in part. This is a high-risk strategy as it requires only those teachers whose registration is due to bear the full responsibility of this action, and because they cannot legally teach without a practising certificate, it puts them at risk of losing their employment. As such the risk would not be equally shared and would place some of our members under huge pressure. In the current climate it also risks negative reception from the public.

Regional PUMs, which would have been considered in a pre-pandemic world, are now problematic. It is hard to foresee at this time what alert level conditions will be in place on July 1<sup>st</sup>, but it is possible that large gatherings will still not be a suitable option, either because we continue to be at an alert level that does not allow them or because members will still be uncomfortable in these gatherings.

The closure of school sites and implementation of distance learning has also caused considerable disruption to teaching and learning. Any further disruption in the form of a regional PUM may be seen by teachers as having an unacceptable impact on student learning and wellbeing.

Branch-based PUMs have similar issues. They still take teachers out of their classrooms at a time when face-to-face time with students is more precious than ever. It also uses our second (and last) PUM for the year, when there may be issues arising from distance and online learning that require nationwide consultation in the form of PUMs.

Electronic voting combined with other digital organising strategies (a countdown, check in activity, Facebook live Q and A etc) could counter the issues of taking teachers out of class, however it also carries the risk of low voter turn-out and limited engagement at a time when teachers are suffering 'digital fatigue'. The impact of a vote of no confidence is to draw attention to members' concerns, and low engagement would significantly decrease the impact of this action.

Branch meetings have the benefit of flexibility. They can be scheduled at a time which causes the least disruption to teaching and learning, but still allow for members to discuss the issues in person. It places less burden on branch chairs and committees than a PUM, but still carries the impact of all members gathering and voting on one day. It also allows branches to discuss any other issues arising and allows us to hold the second PUM in reserve for fallout from the COVID-19 move to distance learning if needed.

## **No confidence in whom? The Teaching Council vs CEO Lesley Hoskins vs Elected Reps**

The Teaching Council as a whole may seem a broad target for a vote of no confidence, however it is the nature of the institution as a whole – an institution which claims to

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Stevenson, letter to Chris Hipkins, March 4th 2020.

speak for teachers but is not a representative body – that teachers object to. If our objective is to restrict the remit of the Teaching Council to its core functions of registration and regulation and to limit its expansion into professional learning, then it is the entire institution in which we have no confidence.

A vote of no-confidence in Lesley Hoskins as CEO may result in a new CEO and yet the issues of the functions of the Teaching Council would remain. Similarly, a vote of no-confidence in the elected representatives may not have the outcome we are seeking. We understand that teachers feel let down by representatives they believed they had elected to advocate for teachers' best interests, but their resignations and new elections would again not confront the need to change the nature of the institution.