



# **PPTA submission to the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction**

**June 2018**

## **1. About PPTA**

1.1 PPTA represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA activity is guided by the following objectives:

- (a) To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- (b) To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- (c) To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Executive, and is on behalf of all of our members, and focusses on the provision of mental health and addiction services in secondary schools.

## **2. What is currently working well?**

2.1 Many schools employ highly experienced and competent guidance counsellors. These counsellors are able to act as an initial contact point for students requiring support, and may refer the student to other services where they are available. Where these services are not available many counsellors have the skill and ability to support the young people through their issues.

2.2 Schools, particularly in larger centres, have access to specialist Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counsellors who are able to work within the school setting and form strong relationships with the young people they work with.

2.3 The ERO national evaluation 'Guidance and Counselling in Schools - Survey Findings' (July 2013)<sup>1</sup> identified that schools with very well supported students use the skills of guidance counsellors:

- Strong leadership
- Strategic resourcing of people, time and space
- People with the professional capacity to help students manage their problems or refer them to expert help
- Clear expectations around guidance and counselling practice

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/guidance-and-counselling-in-schools-survey-findings/>

- Good relationships and communication both internal and external to the school/ wharekura.

### **3. What isn't working well at the moment?**

- 3.1 There is no funding in the school system that is specifically tagged for guidance counsellors. There is funding which is for pastoral care but this includes deans, SENCO and other forms of support needed within schools.
- 3.2 From 1989 until 1995, the Ministry's staffing formula for schools contained a "tagged" element that had to be used to employ guidance counsellor(s). The tagging was removed in 1995 by the Ministerial Reference Group on staffing.
- 3.3 The formula used to be as follows:
- Year 9-13 roll below 400 but above 200: 0.6 FTTE
  - Year 9-13 roll 400-899: 1 FTTE
  - Year 9-13 roll 900-1199: 1.5 FTTE
  - Year 9-13 roll 1200-1399: 2 FTTE
  - Year 9-13 roll 1400-1799: 2.5 FTTE
  - Year 9-13 roll 1800+: 3 FTTE
- 3.4 According to this formula, once a school increased in size over 1800 there was no provision for increased numbers of guidance counsellors. There are now a number of schools with rolls over 1800, so using this formula is not helpful for these schools.
- 3.5 NZAC recommends a ratio of 1 counsellor : 400 students<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.6 The ERO national evaluation 'Guidance and Counselling in Schools - Survey Findings' (July 2013) identified that some schools had no provision for counselling.
- 3.7 While the issues that guidance counsellors deal with are becoming more complex and challenging, we are hearing that the ability to refer students to external specialists is becoming increasingly difficult.
- 3.8 Currently there is no provision for guidance counselling services in Years 1-6.

---

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.nzac.org.nz/viewobj.cfm/schoolguidance\\_finalwebsiteversion.pdf?file\\_name=schoolguidance\\_finalwebsiteversion.pdf&objID=2595](http://www.nzac.org.nz/viewobj.cfm/schoolguidance_finalwebsiteversion.pdf?file_name=schoolguidance_finalwebsiteversion.pdf&objID=2595)

#### **4. What could be done better?**

- 4.1 Tagged provision for guidance counsellors for schools, at a ratio of 1:400. This will allow guidance counsellors the ability to support students who are not acute, while at the same time having the time to deal with crisis work as it arises.
- 4.2 Provision of additional funding to specialist referral agencies such as mental health crisis teams, chronic youth mental health providers, specialist AOD services, etc. This is essential, not just in big centres, but also in our more isolated areas.
- 4.3 Development of schools as community hubs<sup>3</sup>, where counselling, nursing, AOD services, social workers and additional mental health supports are brought within the one facility, based in the school. While such hubs are in existence now in some schools, the presence of such hubs is often a knee-jerk response to a crisis rather than standard practice.
- 4.4 Provision of guidance counsellors in primary schools. By the time young people arrive at secondary school many already have complex mental health needs that have not been identified and as a consequence have escalated.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ppta.org.nz/dmsdocument/337>