

**Oral submission to the Education and Science Select Committee
the NCW Submission on the Education Amendment Bill 77-1
S 13.01 made by Judy Whitcombe and Jean Fuller on 13.2.2013**

Education and Science Select Committee: Chairperson: Cam Calder, National, List; Deputy Chair: Colin King, National, Kaikoura; Metiria Turei, Green, List; Tim Macindoe, National, Hamilton West; Chris Hipkins, Labour, Rimutaka; Tracey Martin, NZ First, List; Sue Moroney, Labour, List; Simon O'Connor, National, Tamaki; Louise Upston, National, Taupo; Megan Woods, Labour, Wigram.

Good morning. My name is **Judy Whitcombe** and my colleague is **Jean Fuller**. We are both members of the Parliamentary Watch Committee of the National Council of Women of New Zealand. This submission has been prepared from a background of policy decisions and consultation with the members of our organisation.

Introduction

In speaking to the written submission, we wish to address the key points in order of their appearance in the Bill. Earlier clauses which have implications for partnership schools will be dealt with under Clause 31.

Multiple timetable arrangements (cl 15)

The key difficulties with the proposal were identified by members as disruptions to:

- Parents' work arrangements
- Out-of-school care
- Sporting and other activities such as music lessons, dance classes, guides and scouts; and
- Family life.

Members pointed out that the disadvantages would apply more to primary age children. However, the coverage of this clause applies to all schools¹.

The example of Christchurch schools using multiple timetable arrangements following the quakes was mentioned, but it was pointed out that the arrangement was only temporary.

When asked about the implications of multiple timetabling one member said:

“We are turning schools back into factories and we have taken over 100 years to get away from that idea.”

Another mentioned the experience in some Asian countries where “it is so stressful for both students and teachers who use the same facilities.”

Functions and Powers of Boards (Cl 16)

The new Section 75 (1) clause was seen to put over-emphasis on qualifications (“highest possible standard of educational achievement”) and contribute to competition via *unfortunate* league tables. The danger of measuring educational outcomes rather than the individual learner’s progress was pointed out.

In the words of one member:

¹ Section 65D of the Education Act 1989 applies to State Schools and the definition of State schools (S 2) covers both primary and secondary and Special schools.

“If such a statement was included, boards would be likely to focus on that small part of their responsibility before others; for example, by narrowing the curriculum to include only areas which are easily able to be tested and to create league tables. Schools should not be competitive, rather they should aim to provide a good education for ALL children.” There was a worry that students less likely to succeed could be excluded from schools.

Teacher Registration (Cl 23-26)

The NCWNZ views on the importance of teacher registration have been articulated over the years – as shown in the written submission.

Surrender and retention of property (Cl 28)

The additions to section 139A of the Act, as outlined in clause 28 of the Bill, were largely supported by members. The opinion that: as long as this was within the law and parents and students sign something which outlines the rules of the school when they enrol, the proposals in the Bill were acceptable.

Although one member notes: “This is an age of ‘children knowing their rights’. There is a very fine line that teachers walk. Removal of personal property can initiate a violent reaction from a student. In accusations of assault, schools must have very clear guidelines and procedures understood by all staff and students.”

Partnership schools kura hourua (Cl 31) New Part 12 A

- The written submission Introduction stated that “Seventy percent of the NCWNZ members do not support the introduction of kura hourua partnership schools.” When opinions were first sought the introduction was not widely supported but in subsequent comments on the Bill members came out more strongly against. It is regretted that in the written submission this percentage was not consistent with the comments on clause 31 where “approximately half” is stated.

In addition to the insertions to Section 158 of the Act, the Bill addresses:

- The use of untrained and unregistered teachers;
- Removal of coverage from the Ombudsman Act 1975 and the Official Information Act 1982;
- The lack of oversight of governance of the school; and the lack of accountability to their community.

All these were issues of great concern to our members.

One member stated:

It is hard to be certain about the advantages of such schools. They are very recent innovations overseas, and in US, where there is some research, the results are mixed, since even there research shows that there are strong variations between states. The state oversight appears to be an important factor, (See Report on Charter Schools, 'The Economist, 7 July 2012). Advantages are claimed for the proposed NZ model, but these are unsupported by evidence.

The further evidence of the very mixed success of overseas examples, referred to in the submission, were also used to support members' position against the introduction of “another education experiment in New Zealand Schools”.

Early childhood education and care centres – and third party leases (CI 34)

The proposal to lease land from the Crown to third parties was seen as allowing business interests to come in over community involvement.

National Student Numbers (CI 35-39)

This proposal - outlined in clause 36 to allow the Secretary to assign a national student number to any child under the age of 6, for the reasons outlined in (1A)

- (a) Unlikely to attend an early childhood service; and
 - (b) The child is likely to benefit from attending such a service.
- was regarded with suspicion.

It was thought that any allocation of student numbers should apply to all children, otherwise there is a risk of stigmatisation - as noted in the submission.

One group summed up the situation: "Education in New Zealand is not compulsory until the child reaches 6 years of age. Pre-school is an optional part of the education system, and we cannot understand how the Secretary can be given the power to assign such numbers when it is not compulsory for children to attend preschool." They ask "Is it proposed that the compulsory starting age for children is going to be lowered to include preschool?"

Conclusion

It is acknowledged that this Education Amendment Bill is somewhat of an omnibus in that it covers a variety areas relating to schooling and education. However, when considering the Bill our members have paid most attention to the proposed introduction of the Partnership Schools and this is where the majority of their concerns were focussed.

Dr Judy Whitcombe
13 February 2013

Questions.

Q. Sue Moroney: Sue Moroney began with an acknowledgement of the variety of issues in the Bill and her appreciation of the willingness of NCWNZ to formulate views on the range of subjects. She noted that ours was the only submission to highlight the effect on sports which could arise from having Multiple Timetable arrangements. Her particular concern was with the use of unregistered teachers in Partnership Schools. She felt that since the majority of teachers were women this represented a "dumbing down" of the sector and possible reason for limiting pay. Ms Moroney wanted to know if NCWNZ had considered this.

A. Judy Whitcombe: Judy referred to the previous several submissions which were noted in the written submission all of which restated the importance which NCWNZ places on qualified and registered teachers. While we had not specifically considered the financial effects of using unqualified teachers she felt it was implicit in our view that properly paid, registered teachers were essential to maintaining standards.

Q. Tracey Martin: Ms Martin returned to the Multiple Timetable section of the Bill and asked if NCWNZ had considered the difficulties this could have on families trying to arrange out-of-school activities. She was particularly concerned with the time table problems which could face rural families.

A. Judy Whitcombe: Judy agreed that NCWNZ was very concerned about the difficulties which extended hours could pose for families. She noted that the situation in Christchurch, where this system was used after the earthquake as a coping mechanism for an emergency, did not fit into the New Zealand way which greatly valued out-of-school activities and sport in particular. Judy suggested that while this type of programme might be appropriate in other countries with a high density of population and less emphasis on other activities, it was not suited to New Zealand.

Jean Fuller,

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