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Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Tomorrow's Schools Review

Introduction

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 245 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 19 branches. In addition, about 350 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 350,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Education Standing Committee after consultation with the membership of NCWNZ.
- 0.2. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review of Tomorrow's Schools.
- 0.3. We wish to acknowledge the important role played to date by teachers, principals, school management and Boards of Trustees, who collectively work extremely hard in the face of significant constraints and increasing expectations and emerging challenges.
- 0.4. We support the continued involvement of parents and the community in the education of our children, as envisaged nearly 30 years ago with the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools. However, we believe that that current system can be strengthened and refined in areas to provide confidence that it will continue to serve the current and future needs of all young New Zealanders.

Questions from Discussion Document

1. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current parent-based Board of Trustees model of school governance?**
 - 1.1 NCWNZ members see strengths in aspects of the current parent-based model of school governance, particularly in the value of trustees that are familiar with their children and with their community. In general, members remain in favour of school autonomy to make decisions, including with respect to staffing, in line with school and community needs.

- 1.2 The emergence of parents as advocates for teachers is regarded as a positive side-effect of the Board of Trustees model. Members described the value of additional lines of communication between parents created because of Board appointments, including those who might not feel comfortable approaching the school senior management directly. The conducting of regular elections for trustee positions is seen as a positive example of the democratic process and observed as empowering for parents and other members of the community.
- 1.3 Members appreciate the potential for a wide range of views and experience through the Board of Trustees model. However, they are of the view that this potential for is not always fulfilled. The diversity of Boards, or lack thereof, continues to be of concern to NCWNZ members, particularly Māori, Pasifika and female representation.
- 1.4 The uneven spread of skills and knowledge of the education system across communities concerns members, with small and rural schools and those in low socioeconomic areas seen as vulnerable to gaps in the necessary knowledge and expertise to administer schools effectively. Members commented that this observable inequity and competition between schools was not an ideal base for education to meet individual and societal needs in the 21st century.
- 1.5 The parent-based model is seen to carry a heavy workload for all Trustees, but particularly for principals and with impact on teaching staff. Members commented that many Board of Trustee members appear to lack a clear understanding of the difference between management and governance, and of a teacher's role, creating additional work for principals and for senior staff. This is occurring in a context of a curriculum that is seen as having narrowed and increased in focus on testing and compliance. Members express concern about staff wellbeing and the ongoing risk of losing talented teachers and principals in this high stress environment.
- 1.6 Greater training and more oversight is suggested as necessary to help Boards recognise gaps and weaknesses and to recruit from a wider pool to mitigate risks, including working with community organisations where relevant. Overall, members are of the view that there needs to be an increase in the availability of authentic support offered by the Ministry of Education to assist Boards to discharge their governance responsibilities. Members commented that school/board 'divisions' and other issues at this level can have long and lasting effects on whole communities where they are not recognised or addressed early.

2. How can we ensure that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is given active expression in all schools and kura?

- 2.1 NCWNZ members support the active and visible expression of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in New Zealand schools. Teacher education and ongoing professional development and greater collaboration and engagement with the community are seen as important ways in which this aspect could be strengthened.
- 2.2 Members recognise the commitment required to increase knowledge of the Treaty and Te Reo and Tikanga Māori competency across the sector and see increased Government funding for ongoing

training and related resources as vital. Greater collaboration with students and with parents was suggested by members, to create more opportunities for whanau to learn alongside their children, reinforcing lessons at home and growing community understanding.

- 2.3 NCWNZ members would like to see greater emphasis on this aspect in the work of the Education Review Office, to ensure this is happening across all schools.

3. How can we ensure that all schools and kura are supported to meet the needs of all children and young people regardless of where they live?

- 3.1 NCWNZ members believe that adequate and equitable funding is needed to meet the needs of all children and young people across New Zealand. This includes adequate and equitable funding to support special needs students; for students with reading and other learning difficulties; for English language tuition; for specialist teachers and teacher aides; and for small schools and for students enrolled with the Correspondence School. Implicit within that adequate and equitable funding is the expectation that teachers should be trusted and supported to do their job, and that parents should be able to meet their family's needs and have access to warm healthy housing, health information and health care, and sufficient income (i.e. minimum of living wage) to feed and clothe and enjoy their families.
- 3.2 Also critical is an adequately funded and cohesive school-based health service, integrating primary health care and including educational psychologists, to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of children and young people within schools. The currently disjointed and inequitable arrangements spanning the funding of education, justice, community, private households, schools and/or DHB is not meeting needs, and is not equitable nor sustainable.
- 3.3 NCWNZ supports best practice, age appropriate compulsory relationship and sexuality education in primary and secondary schools, including dealing with issues of respect and consent. This is also recommended in the recent CEDAW report¹ and our Gender Attitude Survey carried out on a representative sample of New Zealanders in 2017 showed 88% of New Zealanders want healthy relationships education in schools and 81% want gender diversity education in schools.² Funding for these programmes in all schools is essential.
- 3.4 To meet the needs of all children, NCWNZ members feel it is important for teachers to have the time and necessary training to discover how their pupils learn best so that the appropriate programme and class environments can be developed to support their success. "Modern learning environments" are not always seen as the best solution for all students, with some members concerned that teachers haven't necessarily been equipped with the pedagogies to make this transition.

¹ CEDAW/C/NZL/CO/8 Advanced unedited version of 20 July

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW%2fC%2fNZL%2fCO%2f8&Lang=en

² Gender Attitudes Survey: Full Results 2017, NCWNZ, <https://genderequal.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Gender-Attitudes-Survey-FINAL.pdf>

3.5 Overall, access to transformative technology is regarded as important. However, members are concerned that inequitable access to computing and related resources may exacerbate a growing divide in advanced technological competency for future employment and lives. Regular focused ERO inspections are seen as an important part of a system that ensures that all children have equal access and opportunities to these and other resources and support.

4. How can we encourage more schools and kura to work with local community groups and organisations?

- 4.1 NCWNZ members support the aspiration for schools to work with local community groups and organisations. There is a strong sense amongst members that connections are already in place and working effectively.
- 4.2 Members see the value of looking for more ways to share resources, expertise, school facilities, and concern for student wellbeing and success within communities. It is noted, however, that there are genuine barriers to additional levels of collaboration, including time and health and safety requirements. It is suggested that the responsibility for any expansion of this role should lie with the broader community, not the schools themselves.
- 4.3 Programmes in parts of the US, and here, they have shown the value of local businesses and community groups providing experiential education through providing students with opportunities to participate in workplace experience and sponsoring students' attendance at sporting and cultural events and these linkages can play an important role in wider education and encouraging student aspiration which is key. These programmes need to be supported and incentivised.

5. How can we best provide diversity in the type and nature of the schooling available to our increasingly diverse children and young people?

- 5.1 NCWNZ members are committed to a gender equal New Zealand. We see increased training and support for schools and teachers to nurture and reflect their increasingly diverse student body as an important step toward that objective. As part of this, NCWNZ members support equal education opportunities and equal employment for gender diverse people.
- 5.2 Training teachers from different ethnic groups and gender groups, and with backgrounds or exposure to mental health issues, disability or inequity, for example, would improve the diversity of people in leadership roles and give children different role models. Members note the continued predominance of male appointments to principal positions, given the overall gender profile of the profession.
- 5.3 Smaller class sizes are important to get to know students, their identities and their families, along with additional funding for professional development particularly ongoing training related to ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, family, structural discrimination and inequity. This training must be made available not just to teachers but also Board members and school management.
- 5.4 Within the classroom, members would like to see the encouraging of all children to take part in classes involving engineering, IT, cookery, sewing etc. regardless of gender, and to find mechanisms

to once again encourage all families to attend local schools in their area, not travel to out of zone schools. Many schools are already considering neutral toilet facilities and unisex school uniforms; more discussions and consultation (critically, with students) on these are warranted as schools evolve and adapt.

6. How can schools and kura best hear and respond to children and young people's views?

- 6.1 NCWNZ members feel strongly that children and young people should be provided with opportunities to provide input and in ways that are accessible and relevant to them. There is a general feeling among members that this is well catered for now, but that improvement is always possible.
- 6.2 Central is the creation of a positive school culture which actively involves students in their learning, where feedback is genuinely received and acted upon, and where all feel valued and appreciated. Members particularly support empowering students with leadership opportunities, noting that many schools already have Student Councils and equivalent bodies in place.
- 6.3 It is suggested that improved teacher training emphasis on the rights of the child and on practical skills for listening and responding to children and young people's views would be beneficial. Restorative practices should be introduced into all schools.

Recommendations from CEDAW

- 0.5. New Zealand ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 this means that the government is legally bound to implement it.
- 0.6. Although the final Concluding Observations on the eighth periodic report on New Zealand are not yet available, the Advance Unedited Version of 20 July (CEDAW/C/NZL/CO/8) is clear about a number of steps which should be taken in the next four years to reduce discrimination against women and girls, and these have major implications for Tomorrow's Schools. In particular:

24. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society, in cooperation with civil society organizations, in particular women's groups, community leaders, teachers and the media, in order to create an enabling environment that is supportive of gender equality. It further recommends the State party to

(a) Systematically collect data on harmful practices, including cyberbullying targeting teenage girls, and to implement measures, such as awareness campaigns in schools, to prevent such practices;

and

32. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party take the legislative and policy action necessary and allocate adequate resources, in order to:

- (a) *Take all necessary measures, including through increased resources, to facilitate access to secondary and tertiary education for rural girls and women;*
- (b) *Ensure the inclusion in school curricula of mandatory, culturally sensitive and age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible sexual behaviour, focusing on the prevention and the consequences of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;*
- (c) *Provide girls with a safe educational environment free from discrimination and sexual violence and include education on non-violence in the curricula;*
- (d) *Strengthen the efforts aimed at ensuring that no pressure is placed on pregnant teenage girls to leave school or change courses and establish a reintegration policy for teenage mothers while safeguarding against perceiving teen pregnancy and motherhood as a norm;*
- (e) *Continue eliminating stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, provide girls with career counselling, scholarships and other incentives to orient them to science and technology subjects, including meteorological studies, disaster risk reduction and climate change, and ensure that the teacher-training curriculum addresses stereotypes;*
- (f) *Address all impediments to the education of rural girls, including financial and transportation obstacles for rural girls.³*

Summary

- 0.7. The National Council of Women of New Zealand supports the continued involvement of parents and the community in the education of their children. However, our members believe that current system is vulnerable due to the uneven set of skills and experience shown by Trustees across schools and communities. We suggest that the system needs refinement to instil confidence that it will continue to meet the needs of all children to be active participants in the future of New Zealand.



Gill Greer
Chief Executive



Heather Kirkwood
Education Standing Committee

³ CEDAW/C/NZL/CO/8 Advanced unedited version of 20 July
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fNZL%2fCO%2f8&Lang=en