



3 April 2019

S19.03

Submission to the Ministry of Education on Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini

Introduction

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 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 and the Parliamentary Watch Committee based on previous consultation with the membership of NCWNZ on the Tomorrow's Schools Review¹ and existing policy.
- 0.2. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on this important *Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātitini*² report.
- 0.3. NCWNZ is fighting for gender equality because all New Zealanders should have the freedom and opportunity to determine their own future. NCWNZ is pleased to see the equal rights of children reflected in this report, firmly stating that "all children have equal rights to have their views respected, listened to and acted upon" (p33).
- 0.4. NCWNZ wishes to acknowledge the inclusive consultative approach taken, particularly the commitment to listening to the experiences and aspirations of Māori, Pasifika, other ethnic communities and those who live with disability and learning support needs. NCWNZ has long advocated for the recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and believes that practical changes to our

¹ NCWNZ, 2017. Submission on Tomorrow's Schools. S18.32. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/S18.32-Tomorrows-Schools-Review.pdf>

² Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce. 2018. Our schooling futures. Wellington, Ministry of Education. <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assets/TSR/Tomorrows-Schools-Review-Report-Dec2018.PDF>

schooling system that directly benefit the lives of Māori students and their families can be seen as a way of honouring such a commitment.³

1. Governance

- 1.1. NCWNZ is pleased to see in this report *Our Schooling Futures* (OSF) recognition that the current self-governing model is not working well for all students, schools or communities. NCWNZ members have expressed concerns about the uneven spread of skills and knowledge of the education system across communities, with small and rural schools and those in low socioeconomic areas and notes particularly vulnerability for gaps in the necessary knowledge and expertise to administer schools effectively.
- 1.2. However, NCWNZ members also recognise strengths in aspects of the current parent-based model of school governance, particularly in the value of trustees who are familiar with their children and with their community. There is a strong sense amongst NCWNZ members that school connections are already in place and working effectively in many areas. Through the establishment of the proposed Education Hubs and “purposeful connection” that is “wider than individual schools” (p35) we believe that this connectiveness would be strengthened, it will be important, however, not to lose this personal engagement and the value that comes from deep whanau and community involvement.
- 1.3. The report proposes that each hub will look after an average of 125 schools and it is stated that they would be responsible for administration, property management, advisory services and enrolment schemes, as well as have responsibility for appointing and monitoring principals and teachers. NCWNZ members are concerned that there will be insufficient resources to carry out these responsibilities and that local communities could be powerless to appoint principals of their choice with sufficient time to get to know their local community adequately.
- 1.4. Members are also concerned that *this report* recommends the abolition of the Education Review Office and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority without any apparent substantial analysis. It is proposed that an Education Evaluation Unit would replace ERO however there is little information regarding this other than that it would evaluate Hubs rather than schools. There appears to be a lack of discussion on how national qualifications would be monitored and assessed other than the responsibility would sit with the Ministry of Education.
- 1.5. Diversity on Boards has long been of concern to NCWNZ members, particularly Māori, Pasifika and female representation and members have also commented on the heavy workload placed on Board members. Therefore, NCWNZ is pleased to see these aspects recognised in the report, including a recommendation for mana whanau representation and a suggested review of Board members’ fees. NCWNZ will closely monitor the proposed “review of current board membership regulations” (p48) to see that it does help to ensure that Boards represent the community of the school.

³ NCWNZ, 2017. Submission on A Constitution for Aotearoa New Zealand by Sir Geoffrey Palmer and Dr Andrew Butler. S17.14. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S17.14-A-Constitution-for-Aotearoa-New-Zealand.pdf>

- 1.6. NCWNZ urges the Government to ensure that gender impact assessments be undertaken before planning changes to the primary and education school sector, to secure all genders from disadvantage. NCWNZ does note the strong emphasis on diversity throughout the document, but the absence of any specific mention of gender is a concern.

2. Choice, Competition and Provision

- 2.1. NCWNZ members are of the view that inequity and competition between schools is not an ideal base for education to meet individual and societal needs in the 21st century. It is pleasing to see the report similarly conclude that the emphasis on competition between schools has not improved the quality of education, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups in our society.
- 2.2. NCWNZ members support mechanisms that encourage families to attend local schools in their area.
- 2.3. Access to transformative technology as important but NCWNZ members are concerned that inequitable access to computing and related resources may exacerbate a growing divide in advanced technological competency. This report does not address how this divide will be crossed nor how schools and Education Hubs might work to increase diversity in engagement within different components of the curriculum. 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.

3. Disability and Learning Support

- 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 irrespective of social and economic background. This includes adequate and equitable funding to students with reading and other learning difficulties or special needs.
- 3.2. It is pleasing to read in the recommendations that students with learning support needs should have the same access to schools as other students, and that every school should have a learning support coordinator backed up by specialist staff in the Education Hubs. It is less clear how the recommendation for nationally competitive funding for additional needs will meet our members' desire for adequate and equitably funded support.

4. Teaching and Leadership

- 4.1. NCWNZ is pleased to see acknowledgment in the report that "teaching needs to be an inviting professional career for people from diverse backgrounds, occupations and life experiences" and that "teaching and leading roles should be fulfilling, rewarding, manageable and sustainable" (p36).
- 4.2. 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.

- 4.3. NCWNZ members also support legislation and policies that protect and promote the rights of workers engaged in insecure employment, including, those on fixed-term employment with limited access to training and career progression.⁴ Members seek to ensure that pay, conditions and access to the full range of jobs at all levels of the workplace, and experiences in the workplace, are not affected by gender.⁵
- 4.4. In this light, it is pleasing to see the report's suggestion of "innovative and flexible pathways into teaching and leadership" combined with opportunities for advancement across the schooling system (p36), including into the creation of diverse talent pools for leadership (p18).

5. Resourcing

- 5.1. The Education Hubs recommendation signals a major shift in the way support is developed and delivered. Noting that these Hubs will replace current Regional Offices and support an average of 125 schools, we reiterate our members' views that there is a need for an *increase in the availability of support* offered by the Ministry of Education. It is not clear that a reorganisation of existing resources will necessarily improve the availability of support.
- 5.2. Overall, NCWNZ is heartened by the strong conclusions in the report that the amount of resourcing for New Zealand schools is not sufficient. Since the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools, NCWNZ members have maintained an expectation that the funding for primary and secondary schools will ensure that no school will be forced to operate on a budget that is inadequate for pupil needs⁶.
- 5.3. NCWNZ members have long identified the equity issues created by the decile-related funding system, the high costs of schooling to parents and caregivers, and the potential impact of children excluded from participation because of non-payment of fees and/or donations.⁷ It is pleasing to see these aspects recognised in several conclusions and recommendations.

6. Summary

- 6.1. NCWNZ welcomes this report and the focus on diversity and inclusiveness evident in many of the report's conclusions and recommendations. We believe that, while school connections are already in place and working effectively in many areas, this connectiveness could be strengthened by some of the report's proposals. NCWNZ urges the Government to ensure that gender impact assessments be

⁴ NCWNZ, 2015.

⁵ NCWNZ, 2018.

⁶ NCWNZ 2012. 115 years of resolution. 5.5.9. <http://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything-2.pdf>

⁷ NCWNZ. 2012. 115 years of resolution. 5.5.11. <http://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything-2.pdf>

undertaken before planning changes to the primary and education school sector, to secure all genders from disadvantage.

- 6.2. NCWNZ suggests caution in the implementation of the recommendations so as to not disregard benefits or to undermine effective whanau-school and community-school relationships that have developed. While supportive of efforts to reduce the burden on Board members, school collaboration with students and parents is highly valued by NCWNZ members, to create more opportunities for whanau to learn alongside their children, reinforcing lessons at home and growing community understanding.



Pip Jamieson
NCWNZ Board



Heather Kirkwood
Education Standing Committee