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New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on the

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

To: the Education Council

Personal Details:

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The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,200 Principals of Primary, Intermediate, Area and Secondary Schools. Principals are from public, integrated and independent schools and are spread throughout New Zealand. NZPF aims to be the most influential advocate for school principals to enable high quality, well supported leadership for school learners in New Zealand.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Code of Professional Responsibilities.

General Comments

NZPF welcomes the development of a Code of Professional Responsibilities (hereinafter referred to as 'the Code') so that teachers can continue to maintain the very high standards of professionalism which has long been the mark of the profession.

In constructing the Code the challenge is to endorse the existing high standards through positive statements of expected behaviours of educational professionals whilst at the same time ensuring that there is a shared understanding of unacceptable behaviours which we would expect to lead to disciplinary action. A Code which would find acceptance by the profession would in our view, present a balanced approach and would be based on agreed principles.

NZPF congratulates the draft Code writers on constructing the four sets of principles for the Code under the headings Commitment to the Teaching Profession; Commitment to Learners; Commitment to Parents/Caregivers/Whānau; Commitment to Society. We would suggest only one alteration to the principles outlined. We recommend 4.3 be altered to read:

4.3 Demonstrating a commitment to a bicultural and democratic Aotearoa New Zealand

That said NZPF also recognises that for principals to commit to the principles outlined in the Code, their schools must be funded appropriately. For example to commit to the principle outlined as:

2.5 Promoting inclusive practices to support the needs of all learners

Schools are currently under-funded. To commit to full inclusion and support the needs of all students, a commitment to which NZPF wholeheartedly agrees means that special education funding grants need to be increased. A survey of principals undertaken last year indicated that 90% of schools are using their operations grant funding in an endeavour to meet the needs of young people presenting with very challenging learning and behavioural needs. Schools cannot be expected to meet the high standards of commitment to inclusion without the necessary support and ready access to specialist services. To comply with this principle, and others we expect that the Education Council, as advocate for our profession will be exerting pressure on government to have school funding increased and for greater contributions to be made by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health. Where agreed as appropriate we would expect strong advocacy from the Education Council to support the establishment of and retention of existing special schools, including residential options, and special education units within schools.

NZPF appreciates the efforts of the Code writers to present examples of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviours to demonstrate what is expected in complying with the principles outlined. Our concern is that the examples tend to dominate the document. If there are to be examples offered NZPF's preference is that examples be shaped as positive behaviours rather than both positive and negative. The negative examples introduce an unwelcome 'punitive' effect which detracts from the well-constructed principles rather than supports them. They also introduce an element of confusion as to the interpretation of these behaviours which NZPF does not welcome. Principals operate within a culture of continuous learning and improvement of practice and apply this to their teachers. The negative examples outlined in the Code are unhelpful in this regard. Principals have concerns about their capacity to monitor the Code as presented whilst maintaining the high trust collaborative culture they wish to nurture amongst the teaching staff in their schools.

NZPF recommends that the Education Council undertakes a further thorough and unrushed consultation with the sector to create a Code of Professional Responsibilities, based on the very well-constructed principles outlined in this draft which the whole profession can feel proud of.

Included with this submission is the completed Consultation Submission Form

Yours sincerely

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