



PRINCIPAL MATTERS

NGĀ TUMUAKI O AOTEAROA

THE MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCATE FOR NEW ZEALAND'S PRINCIPALS

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President's Message



Kia ora e te whānau

NZPF is concerned about the lack of safety and protection for principals in their employment.

Principals are exposed in their role as a member of the school's Board of Trustees and as an employee of that very same Board.

In instances where inappropriate governance occurs or where a Board acts in a vexatious manner towards a principal, damage is being wrought.

Because of their isolation in the employment construct, principals can be exposed when a Board of Trustees acts unfairly and might also be subject to a mandatory report to the Teaching Council.

There is little protection to stop such inappropriate action being launched at a principal.

I am aware of principals who have ended their career because of the stress and expense involved in defending themselves from unfair claims.

Such a reality is unconscionable. A principal, like every other employee in the workplace, deserves to be protected from unfair and vexatious conduct. Such protections are particularly pertinent in a profession that is governed by a Board of

Trustees, a small minority of which struggles to discharge their duties as a good employer.

NZPF is the owner of the outstanding *Principals Advice and Support Limited (PASL)*, a legal insurance scheme that provides an expert helpline to principals and up to \$25,000 of legal representation should it be required. Over 1200 principals hold this legal protection.

I recently asked the PASL lawyers to summarise some of the serious issues that have exposed principals.

I have written to the Teaching Council to highlight these concerns and have received a [reply](#) highlighting proposed legislative changes already under consideration. The change most pertinent to principals' employment deals with the jurisdiction between the Complaints Assessment Committee and the Disciplinary Tribunal to streamline processes and avoid double handling of cases.

The Teaching Council also commented that it would be 'useful to have an initial meeting with NZPF alongside other Principal groups and NZSTA to clarify this space in a way that might constructively support developing better information for both Boards and Principals and support our review of processes and guidance at the triage stage, once the matter has been referred for investigation or evaluation.'

NZPF will progress this engagement to focus the Teaching Council and NZSTA on the lack of safety for principals in their employment when dealing with inappropriate employer conduct.

The PASL lawyers have asked important questions that this engagement needs to urgently deal with. Two of the most significant are:

[Why does the Teaching Council not require mandatory reports to be balanced and fair?](#)

There is concern that the Teaching Council seems to rely on whatever a Board of Trustees has told them even when the Board's narrative is not supported by the available documentary evidence. Why does the Teaching Council not require compliance with section 4 of the mandatory report form, and in particular the requirement to 'describe the teacher's

response' so that a fair judgement can be made as to whether the claims should be considered as legitimate? How can illegitimate claims be rejected early in a mandatory reporting process?

Why does the process of concluding an outcome to a mandatory report take so long?

The length of some investigations is seriously damaging for principals' mental health and wellbeing. The impact of having to tell a prospective employer that you are under investigation by the Teaching Council cannot be underestimated. Quite apart from the inevitable financial consequences (given how risky it would be for any employer to employ someone who was under investigation) it causes significant reputational damage and sustained anguish for the principal. Some principals have been under investigation for two or three years.

The letter received from the Teaching Council in response to NZPF's concerns confirms their desire to work towards improving investigation and evaluation processes, to create mana preserving processes that follow a tikanga informed approach.

We welcome that.

However, they need to go further. By dint of their unique vulnerability, principals need careful consideration within the process to ensure they are protected from the worst-case scenarios in the employment construct.

Initial Teacher Education

In my Principals' Matters (PM) [Issue 16](#), I raised concerns about the quality of ITE.

In response, I received the following letter from Nicola Ngarewa, Chair of the Teaching Council. She asks that her response to my PM is shared with principals. Please find her letter [here](#).

Noting Nicola's concerns, I replied. My letter is [here](#).

NZPF is committed to working with all stakeholders to address the ITE issues of concern. They are real, serious, and urgent.

Primary Principals' Bargaining Collective (PPBC)

Please note the results of our recent survey. A total of 1,085 responses (56.28%) were received from 1,928 NZPF members.

Question 1

I support NZPF establishing a bespoke union arm for primary principals (PPBC) to give them a voice in industrial negotiations.

YES 908
NO 176
DID NOT RESPOND 1

Question 2

I am most likely to choose to belong to the PPBC if it becomes an established option.

YES 885
NO 191
DID NOT RESPOND 9

The support to belong to PPBC is 81.5% of those who voted.

A 56.28% return rate represents a higher return than is usual for surveys we have conducted. The NZPF Executive will be

discussing these results at our June Executive meeting Thursday 17 June to Saturday 19 June. The percentage returning a positive response is sufficient to make the establishment of PPBC viable.

I'll be in touch next Friday with further information.

Ngā manaakitanga

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NZPF Notices



NZPF Conference - Rotorua

This year's conference theme is Power, Passion, Pace; Pai tu Pai hinga! Whakamaua kia tina! This signifies a need to renew, refresh and move ahead after an unusually fragmented year in 2020.

The conference will be held at the Energy Events Centre, Rotorua on 2-4 August 2021.

For further details and to register for the conference, please go to www.nzpfconference.com.



NZ Principal Magazine also Online

You and/or your team members can easily access the NZ Principal Magazines online, as an e-magazine or as a PDF. Additionally you can search for a previous issue, an article by title or by the author of the article. All magazines back to Term 1 2012 are available in this format. To view or search click [here](#).

Useful Information



VLN Primary School - Registrations Invited for online programmes starting Term 3

Extend curriculum choices for your learners and increase your schools confidence and capability in online and distance learning.

A wide range of language programmes available including te reo Māori and Kapa Haka, Digital Technology, Gifted & Talented, Creative Arts, Science & Maths and Literacy.

All NZ children are welcome to learn with the VLN Primary - Nau Mai, Haere Mai!

Registrations close Monday 28th June

Find out more and register your interest online or contact primary@vln.school.nz with queries.

Rachel Whalley, VLN Primary School

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