

## Rural Matters



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Rural Matters 2 - 7 July 2016

## Welcome to 'Rural Matters' Issue 2016

### Trans-Tasman Conference Rural Lunch

First, I want to say thanks to all of you who came to our Trans-Tasman conference lunch and participated in our networking session to brainstorm the many challenges that you face in rural schools. Six headings captured most issues. These were hauora, property, staffing, special education, community/personal and PLD. Special mention was made about the NZPF Principal Leadership Advisory (PLA) Service, by Pat Newman, principal of HoraHora School who said since David Hain had been appointed PLA for Northland the improvements were glaringly noticeable. There are high hopes that this service will continue to expand across the country so that many more principals can benefit. Our Australian colleagues, who bring a whole new meaning to the notion of 'isolation' also had contributions to make suggesting video conference technology to reduce the stress of travel time to meetings. A number of principals showed interest in investigating this option further and finding ways to improve the working conditions for rural principals.



In such a brief session, it is never possible to find solutions to everything or even generate the ideas to start forming solutions. Now that you are all back in your schools again, and have had time to think about the issues raised in the networking session, you may have reflected on some possible solutions. If so, we would love to hear from you. Contact [Karen](#) with all your ideas and we will feed them back out to everyone through this publication.

Our special thanks to Kelvin Wodley, principal of Tapawera School, who has sent in some excellent advice on how to get the help you need and how to manage property issues. I am sure you will find the advice on both topics really useful.

### Getting the help you need

Early in my time at Tapawera I was having a frustrating time securing the assistance I needed for the school and particularly key students. In discussion with a far more experienced colleague I was given the following advice.... "Reach as high up the tree as you can and shake."

So what does that mean? Here are a couple of examples.

1. When you email a request - copy someone else into the email who is further up the 'food chain'. This guarantees that a conversation is going to happen. Keeping the MoE informed is useful if you are dealing with special education services. Make use of your Senior Advisor - that is what they are there for.

2. If the responses you get from a bureaucrat seem unreasonable - just go higher.

I have found Peter Hughes to be very responsive and he has done a lot of work trying to make the system more reasonable and responsive so take him at his word. He will pass the matter down the food chain to a level that works for him and it is highly likely that you will get a satisfactory response.

3. Still not happy? get your MP to make a few CAREFUL enquiries on your behalf. That is what they are there for.

Our NZPF media advisor tells us that when you have exhausted all of the above avenues and still have no resolution, there is always the media. She advises that before you ring TVNZ or TV3 to vent your frustrations, make sure that you have clarity around what you are trying to achieve, what you have already done to resolve your problem(s) and the outcomes of your efforts. Secondly, consult the [media tips](#) from Dr Brian Edwards and Judy Callaghan's website. You may even wish to purchase their excellent book 'How to survive and win with the media'. Some principals' associations have in the past engaged Brian and Judy for a media training session and found them excellent. Handling the media does take special skills and unless you have them, it could be a dangerous option and make your situation worse rather than improve things.

## Property

I repeatedly hear people talking about how much work property is for Principals and how they don't want to do it.

I take a different position. We/I don't want the system to take control of property again.

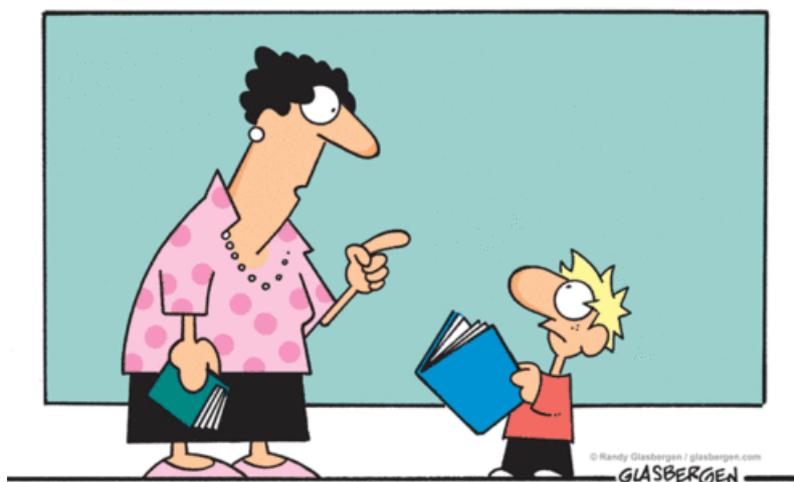
Why not? Because if the bureaucracy gets hold of the property again it will be run down again and key decisions will end up being made for us. Not initially, but over time we will lose our influence and control. Back to getting property things 'done to us' by people who 'know better'.

So how can you make property matters easier for your self?

1. Know what you are comfortable dealing with, and what you are not.
2. Once you have clarified those limits find others who can guide key areas.
  - Grounds and care taking can be somewhat devolved to grounds and care taking staff. Let them do it, give them guidelines, but let them get on with it.
  - Find a Board member who has property skills - even if only at DIY level - share the decisions with them. Send them to trainings.
  - No Board skills? What about a staff member's partner? Or a past, trusted contractor? There has to be someone in your community who can help you make wise decisions around property. Keep looking until you find them.
  - Phone a friend. Most of us who have been in the role for a long time are more than happy to share our knowledge/experience either with you or with your chosen person.
3. Build up a small group of contractors who know your school and who you can trust. This list needs to include at least: a Plumber/Drainlayer; Builder; Electrician; Painter. If you don't have locals (they are usually the most trust worthy as they have a vested interest in seeing things done properly at their local school) call a neighbouring school and ask who they use.
4. In an isolated area? Put the word around that you have a contractor coming to town and that way others can get those pesky little jobs done too. Everybody wins.

## Holidays

We have recently heard the Minister's announcement that IT is to be integrated across the curriculum. I suggest that you take a message from the cartoon below and perhaps install some recreational software into your own brain these holidays!



**"It's called 'reading'. It's how people  
install new software into their brains"**

And just before you close the school gate behind you, take a quick look at this little clip for a bit of genuine uplifting inspiration.

<https://youtu.be/eNxO9MpQ2vA>

Noho ora mai ra

*Iain Taylor*

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