

NEW ZEALAND PRINCIPALS' FEDERATION

22 June 2010

SUBMISSION ON: *THE DEAF EDUCATION DISCUSSION PAPER*

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The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) represents the interests of 2,578 Principals of Primary and Secondary Schools throughout New Zealand. We acknowledge receipt of the *Deaf Education discussion Paper* and commend the Ministry of Education's intent to *improve specialist services for deaf and hearing impaired children and young people* (p.1). We thank you for the opportunity to respond to your discussion document on education for the deaf which focuses on the way in which special education services might be provided to this group in the future. We have consulted with our colleagues engaged in the education of the deaf in constructing our response.

Introduction

NZPF agrees that useful changes could be made to improve delivery of education services for deaf children and agrees that *some parents* [are concerned] *that their children are not being well served through existing service arrangements* and that there is a *lack of service integration* (p.2).

The document outlines *Drivers for change* and we make the following comments in respect of that section of the document:

- We agree that the needs of Maori and Pasifika deaf children are not always adequately met and that there is an over-representation of this group amongst deaf children.
- We agree that early, effective (skilled and qualified support staff) and well coordinated services need to be delivered equitably across the country
- We acknowledge that too often it requires the negotiation of layers of bureaucracy to free funds intended for deaf education. We note that this may be the result of GSE appointing themselves as the 'funds holders'. For example, Deaf Education Centres are responsible for the contract for cochlea habilitation, yet don't directly receive funds for this activity.

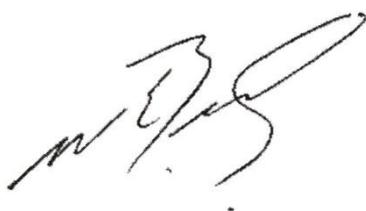
- We note that the governance of deaf education is up for review and may not be adequately serving deaf children's needs .

Concerns

- We note that the sector has enacted a massive restructuring over the last twelve months in order to meet budget on what the Ministry considers to be 'core services'.
- The dispersion of ORRS funding is fragmented and the use of it varies considerably. We note that some of it is diverted to the general pool of the SENCO in a school, rather than for its intended purpose. In our view, the use of teacher time funded by ORRS and other sources needs serious review and national monitoring so that funds intended to support deaf children is used for that purpose.
- There is a lack of dedicated resource to enable access to the NZC by children who sign, despite sign language being an official language of New Zealand, endorsed by the NZC (p.14).
- Currently advisors for the deaf hold the balance of power in decision making about deaf children. In our view some advisors are less than well equipped to be making these decisions, and are at times making them whilst still in training. This situation negatively impacts on the quality of decisions made in respect of our deaf children.
- Deaf children residing in either Auckland or Christchurch, where there are Deaf Education Centres, satellites in regular schools and itinerant teachers, are advantaged compared to deaf children dependent on the less regular attention of advisors in the regions and rural areas of the country. This situation creates inequity of service provision.

We are not convinced that any single option suggested in the discussion document adequately addresses all of our concerns and thus we are unwilling to endorse any of the four options presented. We would recommend however that certain principles be incorporated into the model that is finally adopted. These would include that there would be no additional costs for schools; that the funding would be as close to frontline service provision as possible; that there would be consistent service provision, a single vision for deaf education and a reduction of fragmented services; that the model would be sufficiently flexible as to provide local solutions within geographical boundaries; that the model would be collaborative between service providers, involve stakeholder groups and would provide accountability to the deaf communities within local regions.

Yours sincerely



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