

16 April 2018

New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on the

PROPOSED CHANGES TO VETTING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOLS AND HOME-BASED EARLY LEARNING SERVICES

To: The Ministry of Education

Personal Details:

Agency: New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)
Designation: National Executive
Address: National Office, PO Box 25380, Wellington 6146

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,259 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 proposed changes to vetting requirements for schools and home-based early learning services.

Introduction

Since the introduction of the Vulnerable Children's Act (VCA), inconsistencies have arisen according to where a young person's learning takes place. For example, rules differ between home-based and school-based learning. NZPF believes that in applying the VCA, or any other legislation, there must be consistency of practice.

In respect of the VCA application to trades-workers in schools, we recall the difficulties Police encountered as they struggled to keep up with the volume of Police vets being requested by schools. Further, the same issues arose in respect of teacher aides, and relief teachers many of whom work across multiple schools. In some cases, children were unable to start school because their teacher aide had not yet received their clearance from Police.

Safety Checking for People Who Live Where Home-Based Early Learning is Provided

We agree that people living in home-based early learning environments pose the same risk to children as those working in schools or early learning centres. It therefore follows that all people working with young children, irrespective of the learning setting, would be treated the same in terms of Police vetting and they would all undergo the same comprehensive safety checks.

There are six Government Departments accountable for protecting and improving the lives of vulnerable children, one of which is the Ministry of Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki. Oranga Tamariki already provides comprehensive information on the safety requirements for both non-core and core children's workers entitled, *Children's Worker Safety Checking under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014*.

In our view comprehensive safety checks are best conducted by Oranga Tamariki, who would be appropriately resourced to undertake this work.

Requirements to Police Vet Contractors Who Enter Schools and Early Learning Services

NZPF disagrees that contractors working in multiple schools in an area should be vetted by each school. This is a dysfunctional practice which unnecessarily draws on Police resources and school resources and contributes to delays in getting work completed. Principals already struggle with the time delays in obtaining Police vets. The practice equally applies to relief teachers and teacher aides who may work in multiple schools. NZPF recommends a time limit of five-days turn-around for completing vet checks, so that contractors can be appointed in a timely manner.

In our view, Police vetting for contractors, teacher aides and relief teachers should include the requirement to provide evidence to prove they are who they say they are by producing original identity documents. Once the normal vetting process was successfully completed this information would then be stored online by the Police. Any school could then contact Police to access the contractor's/teacher aide's/relief teacher's vet status and clearance to work in a school.

Whetu Cormick
PRESIDENT
NZPF
whetu@nzpf.ac.nz

PO Box 25380
Wellington 6146

Level 8 The Bayleys Building
36 Brandon Street

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

ph:+64 4 471 2338
fax:+64 4 471 2339

email: office@nzpf.ac.nz
web: www.nzpf.ac.nz