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Education Legislation Submissions
Ministry of Education
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Education Legislation Submission

New Zealand Kindergartens Te Pūtahi Kura Puhou o Aotearoa (NZK) represents the interests of 25 regional kindergarten associations which employ over 2,000 registered teachers across 445 kindergartens working with around 22,000 young children and their families and whānau each day.

We provide comment on three of the areas the ministry seeks feedback on:

- Protecting the public interest in the work of the Education Council
- Establishing a College of Educational Leadership
- Changes to vetting requirements

Protecting the public interest in the work of the Education Council

The Education Council is currently constituted as an independent body. Part of its brief is to protect the public interest which is a factor in the governing board's decision making. The council is required to consult with stakeholders, which includes the government. This requirement remains in place.

The appointment of board members by the minister is considered the stronger of two levers identified by the ministry, that the government has currently to protect the public interest. Under proposed changes to the make-up of the council's board, the minister retains the ability to appoint members to the board. Arguably, the protection of public interest will be maintained through this process. Equally, we would assume the elected members of the council would have a responsibility to protect the public interest also.

The public interest goes beyond teacher education and registration. Restricting public interest to two aspects of the council's work seems short-sighted and pre-determines for the public where their interests lie, rather than acknowledging a broader interest.

- NZK proposes the status quo remains: protecting the public interest being a principle underpinning the council's decision-making and a function of its work.

The objectives of the changes to the legislation regarding the council relate to the representation of roles and sectors and the name of the organisation. We understand the current functions will remain in place. There is an expectation from the profession that in making these changes they have greater ownership of their professional body. The issuing of a Government Policy Statement is likely to be viewed as a directive thereby undermining the independence of the council.

Establishing a College of Educational Leadership

The quality of pedagogical leadership is a significant influence on the outcomes for all learners regardless of where they are in the system.

NZK is concerned the consultation on the establishment of a College of Educational Leadership focuses solely on the schooling sector when it must focus on pedagogical leadership across the profession.

- NZK proposes the Education Council/Teaching Council retain its focus on leadership and the College of Educational Leadership be part of the council.

The work undertaken by the Education Council to date on the development of a leadership strategy for the profession, is inclusive of early childhood education. We expect future work would continue to include and reflect the sector.

The council already has a role in growing leadership across the profession. Work has commenced on developing a leadership strategy which the profession has been engaged in and has a vested interest in. It is the first time, teachers and leaders in the early childhood education sector have been fully included in such an exercise.

It makes sense leadership is not seen in isolation. It touches on other aspects of the council's work such as initial teacher education. Achieving best results is more likely where there is a cohesive approach to policy and implementation nested within a broader framework of professional expectation and responsibilities. The council maintains responsibility for registration standards and the code of professional responsibility, further examples where discussion and planning around leadership intersect with the council's work programme.

The council has a structure in place to accommodate and support a college. The board would have a key role and influence in determining at a high level, the leadership strategy. This level of ownership and 'buy in' by the profession would be unlikely if the college was housed in the ministry or other government agency. We are not confident the ministry would attend to and include the early childhood education sector given our experience, and it seems from this consultation paper, the ministry's priority and focus remains purely on the schooling sector.

It would be unnecessary and a waste of public resource to establish a college as a new entity when the council is well positioned to take on the role. Separate reporting, monitoring, policy development and implementation for example, would add unnecessarily complexity and duplication to the system and create a 'disconnect' across the profession.

Changes to vetting requirements

- NZK agrees people who live where home-based care is provided but are not children's workers, should be subject to more rigorous vetting requirements, and that these should be developed jointly with the sector and appropriate government agencies.
- We propose the owner of home-based services should undertake the safety check.
- NZK supports contractors and tradespeople being safety checked and that information being available to schools and services where the contractor is undertaking work.
- We propose an accreditation system be established which would demonstrate that contractors and tradespeople have been safety checked and met standards. This could be undertaken centrally by umbrella organisations such as building or plumbing companies, with regular attestation that people continue to meet safety standards. The accreditation register could be administered and held centrally by peak bodies or a central government agency.

Ngā mihi nui

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Chief Executive