



Proactive Release

Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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PPTA

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

TE WEHENGARUA

www.ppta.org.nz

SUBMISSION

to the

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

On

CHILD WELLBEING STRATEGY

December 2018

About PPTA

PPTA represents the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education in New Zealand, including secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers.

Under our constitution, all PPTA activity is guided by the following objectives:

- a) To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
- b) To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
- c) To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

This submission is from the PPTA Executive and is on behalf of all of our members, but recognises that many of them, as individuals or through their branches, regions, and interest groups, will also be making submissions, some of which may differ from this.

1. Introduction

1.1. PPTA supports the intent of the Child Wellbeing Strategy. In our submission we wish to highlight some of the most vulnerable young people who are not visible in the strategy and provide some possible solutions that could be applied within the compulsory education sector.

2. LGBTIQA+ children and young people

2.1 Students who identify as members of the LGBTIQA+ communities have been identified in a number of studies, both in New Zealand and internationally, as having poorer educational, health and social outcomes¹²³. The Proposed Outcomes Framework and Proposed Focus Areas identify many minority groups for whom wellbeing is a significant issue, such as those who are ethnically diverse, disabled, have learning differences, and who have issues with physical and mental health. However, those young people who are sex-, sexuality- and gender-diverse are in the category 'or for any other reason'.

2.2 We know that students who are same- or both-sex attracted and students who are gender diverse are more likely to be bullied and feel unsafe at school. We know that these young people are more likely to have negative health outcomes. We know that they attempt suicide (see Footnotes 1 and 2). Yet this group is completely invisible in the framework and focus areas.

2.3 You could argue that sex, sexuality and gender diverse students are included under the 'any other reason' bullet point. However, until we stop being afraid to name this

¹<https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/fmhs/faculty/ahrg/docs/Youth'12%20Young%20People%20Attracted%20to%20the%20Same%20or%20Both%20Sexes%20Report.pdf>

² <https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/fmhs/faculty/ahrg/docs/Youth12-transgender-young-people-fact-sheet.pdf>

³ Mark Henrickson PhD MANZASW, Stephen Neville RN MA (Hons) FCNA (NZ), Claire Jordan PhD & Sara Donaghey BA (Hons) (2007) Lavender Islands, Journal of Homosexuality, 53:4, 223-248, DOI: 10.1080/00918360802103514

group there will be no action. They will continue to be ignored, and as a consequence, continue to have poor education, health and social outcomes.

3. Guidance Counsellors

- 3.1 In a secondary school context the person most likely to be dealing with the mental health issues of our young people is the guidance counsellor. In a best practice model, they are a specialised education professional⁴. They are both a teacher and a counsellor. The New Zealand Association of Counsellors recommends that they work with a ratio of 1 counsellor: 400 students in a school setting⁵. In many schools, this is not achievable based on the current funding models, and guidance counsellors are working with ratios that are often as high, if not higher, than 1:1000. This means that the counsellor is only able to deal with the crisis work, if that, and those students with chronic mental health issues are slipping through the cracks⁶. Counsellors report that it is often difficult to access specialist outside services to meet the needs of their students.
- 3.2 This is not tenable for the counsellors who are reaching breaking point, nor is it meeting the needs of the young people under their care. Additionally the absence of funded guidance counselling services in primary and intermediate school is of grave concern (as if students simply develop issues requiring support only as they enter Year 9).
- 3.3 Funding of the guidance services in school and, in particular, the staffing issues for guidance counsellors, including the ratios they operate under, must be addressed. Until this occurs the schooling sector has little capacity to provide any improvement in the focus areas described in the proposal.

4. Schools as Hubs

- 4.1 PPTA has long advocated for schools as hubs to try to alleviate some of the disparity related to socioeconomic status. The significant correlation between the socioeconomic status (SES) of students and their achievement in education is persistent and presents a major challenge for schools, policy makers and society as a whole. In New Zealand we recognise this link to some extent already with the decile funding system and associated targeting of various services. Also, New Zealand's curriculum and qualification system already provide some elements that enable schools to mitigate the impact of SES. Educational success and wellbeing do not exist in isolation from each other.
- 4.2 PPTA supports the international research that says strong connections between schools, families and communities are crucial to the success of the broad social mission of education⁷.

⁴ <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Supporting-students/Pastoral-Care-Guidelines-Te-Pakiaka-TangataNov2017.pdf>

⁵ http://www.nzac.org.nz/viewobj.cfm/schoolguidance_finalwebsiteversion.pdf?file_name=schoolguidance_finalwebsiteversion.pdf&objID=2595

⁶ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/108782281/school-guidance-counsellors-operating-in-crisis-mode>

⁷ <https://www.ppta.org.nz/dmsdocument/337>

- 4.3 Individual schools alone can't overcome the achievement gap that exists between students of high and low SES, but there are policies that can enable the education system to "push back" harder against it.
- 4.4 In countries such as Finland, the low incidence of poverty and high social equity contributes significantly to the high educational achievement. PPTA believes the government could mitigate poverty and improve educational outcomes by equipping secondary schools with the support, resources and expertise to develop their role as "community hubs" – allowing them to initiate such measures as collaborative food in schools programmes, extended teen parent units, youth-friendly health and social services and greater after school opportunities and holiday programmes. All of these types of initiative are likely to have an impact on the wellbeing of the young people who benefit from it.
- 4.5 We support the government's desire to narrow New Zealand's growing poverty gap and encourage research into good practice for school-based community hubs in New Zealand.