



MEDIA RELEASE

13 March 2015

School trustees serve their communities well

School trustees should be recognised for the valuable community service they provide around the country, says NZSTA President Lorraine Kerr.

As of September 2010, there were 17,477 trustees. 10,993 of these were community members elected by parents. Other trustees included school principals, staff trustees, student trustees and proprietors' representatives. Many trustees serve on school boards for a number of years after their children have left school.

There are a number of people still serving on boards of trustees who have been doing so continuously for 25 years since the Tomorrow's Schools reforms were introduced, although some of them have changed schools over that time. Since NZSTA started keeping records in 2010 they have awarded over 300 long-service certificates to trustees who have served continuously for five years or more. Of those, 125 are for a decade or more of continuous service.

School trustees bring valuable skills and local knowledge to the table. "In the past there has been a perception that boards of trustees are 'just volunteers' but that does not reflect the board's legal status as the school's governing board" says Lorraine. "You wouldn't say that about any other board of directors – and that's what the board of trustees' role is in a school."

Many trustees are professional people in their day jobs. Others bring valuable local knowledge and community connections to the board table. Time on the local board of trustees can also be a stepping stone to bigger things. Several current and past members of parliament have been school trustees earlier in their career.

"It's a complex and sometimes difficult job, but it is also very rewarding," Lorraine says. "We expect every board to undertake some professional development as part of their commitment to continuous improvement in their school. There are some very specific requirements on school boards that don't apply elsewhere, and ideas of what good practice looks like are constantly evolving.

"In the end, it's not a job we do because it's easy, it's a job we do because it's worth doing well."

Ends

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