

MEDIA RELEASE

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Enthusiastic response to government work plan from Trustees' organisation

The government's work plan for education, released yesterday, presents some exciting opportunities to progress issues that boards of trustees have been concerned about for some time says NZSTA President, Lorraine Kerr.

"We're already on record as supporting many of the ideas that this work plan proposes," she says, "so we'll be in there with a positive attitude and a lot of energy to promote constructive change."

"Boards of trustees fulfil an incredibly valuable role in our education system and in our society as a whole, and we're confident that these days Ministers, Select Committees and parliamentarians generally understand that.

"Boards of trustees are made up of people who tend to focus on getting things right for their students, not on tooting their own horn. We probably need to get better at celebrating our successes, but there is plenty of evidence out there that most boards of trustees fulfil a complex role very well, and that they are becoming more and more effective over time. So we are certainly not expecting this to be a hatchet job on boards of trustees," Lorraine says.

"There's a kind of urban myth that Tomorrow's Schools is just about boards of trustees, but in fact Tomorrow's Schools established the whole structure of the education sector as we know it now, including the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Teaching Council (NZTC) which has since been reformed into the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand.

"Tomorrow's Schools set out the whole approach to funding schools, Early Childhood centres and tertiary institutions based on neoliberal economic theories of free market competition.

"These are all big questions, and Minister Hipkins is quite right to point out that after almost 30 years, it's time to take a long hard look at every part of the system to see if it is still the best system that we can possibly make it. I think we all, if we are honest, would say that there are things we can do better at a system level", Lorraine says. "We believe that there's always room for improvement, and boards of trustees themselves tell us every week about things that could be improved such as the inconsistent approach to governance in Communities of Learning |Kahui Ako and the issues that creates in terms of boards'

In our children lies our future - E tipu e rea

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responsibilities to the students at their own schools. That's in the work plan too. So we believe it is definitely on the right track."

NZSTA is particularly pleased that the work plan addresses system-level issues including the need to invest in a more coherent lifelong education system that will provide a genuinely student-centred process that treats students consistently and minimises barriers to participation.

"Transitions between different types of institutions are notoriously difficult for many students, and much of that is because of artificial barriers that our 3-tier system creates for them," says Lorraine.

"There are a lot of other issues with the status quo, like the tension between competitive funding models and collaborative teaching models, being genuinely inclusive of students with different learning needs, different social, ethnic or economic backgrounds, and how to clear away the worst of the administrivia that inevitably clutter up a system after almost 30 years.

Some work outlined in the work plan is already under way, or will refine, revisit or refocus work that has already been done or is already underway. (For example, the TRASP report can be expected to inform the taskforce on reducing compliance-based paperwork.)

As always, effective implementation will be critical. NZSTA expects to be an active participant in these work streams.

One noticeable feature of the work plan is the high profile outlined for sector and public participation, including an education summit to be held in May. NZSTA encourages the public as well as school boards, principals and staff to [download and read the cabinet paper](#) from the Ministry of Education's website so that they are ready to participate in the public conversation when the time comes.

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