

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Support boards of trustees, don't replace them**

School governance in New Zealand is not broken. School boards of trustees have been the most cost-effective part of the education system for the past 30 years, in spite of the lack of adequate support for the role over most of that period. Self-governance has been proven to work in a large number of schools and is improving overall all the time.

NZSTA welcomes the proposal to reinstate effective support and services for schools through a district hub model, particularly for property, health and safety and teacher professional development. The continual erosion of these services over the 30 years of Tomorrows Schools has placed huge burdens on boards, principals, staff and communities and compromised students' experiences and achievement levels.

However NZSTA rejects the idea that the governing role should be taken away from boards of trustees and given to hubs instead.

"Over recent weeks the Taskforce has said that the issues being raised by stakeholders and commentators are, for various reasons, not what the Taskforce intended. Unfortunately, we can only respond to what the Taskforce has actually said, not what they think they meant," says NZSTA President Lorraine Kerr.

"What they have said is that the governing role should be taken away from boards of trustees and given to hubs. If that's not what they meant they have the opportunity to correct that in the final version of their report, and that is exactly what we think they should do.

"A governing body leads, navigates and directs. A representative body represents. A service provider takes direction from their client's needs.

"You can't be an effective service provider and at the same time be an effective governing body for the clients you provide services to. It's a clear conflict of interest.

"You don't need to disrupt the grassroots democracy of locally elected boards of trustees, in order to provide better services and support – in fact NZSTA is so confident of that fact we are willing to take it on ourselves," says Lorraine

NZSTA is already highly effective at supporting boards of trustees, and one of the few organisations to have a system-wide perspective and responsibilities across the compulsory education sector. Over the years, NZSTA has carved out a well-deserved reputation as an 'honest broker' and a voice of reason within the sector.

*In our children lies our future - E tipu e rea*

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All of this creates an obvious and natural progression by expanding NZSTA's existing network of support hubs to embrace the full suite of support services proposed in the Taskforce report.

NZSTA currently operates seven regional hubs providing on-the-ground support and advice to boards of trustees and principals in core governance areas such as strategic planning, financial reporting, policy development, self-review, meeting procedure, community engagement, student achievement (schools' core purpose) and employment practices. These services are provided free to boards under contract to the Ministry of Education.

NZSTA's regional hubs operate on a service delivery model, as proposed by the Taskforce. Growing the proposed new hubs as service centres from the NZSTA regional hubs with their strong service and support orientation would have significant advantages over trying to transform existing Ministry of Education offices into effective service delivery depots.

Expanding NZSTA's current regional capacity to fill the role envisaged in the Taskforce report would require the inclusion of two major work streams to complement the existing service provision:

- professional support for education practitioners
- business support including property, financial and administrative services.

NZSTA is confident of its ability to provide effective advocacy, leadership and support to school boards across all areas envisaged by the Taskforce proposals through the expansion of its existing regional network of service hubs.

## **Ends**

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