



President's Comment 10

22nd April 2010

Dear Colleagues

Welcome back to Term two. I trust you took the opportunity to spend some quality time with family and friends.

Mangatepopo Gorge Tragedy – Coroners Report

During the holidays the Coroner, Christopher Devonport released his report on the tragic deaths of six Elim Christian School pupils and their teacher.

The Coroner made 27 recommendations which are all very useful. Hindsight is a wonderful thing but there are a few lessons for all schools to take away from this tragedy. They include:-

1. That teachers in charge of EOTC and camps in your school should ensure that the recommendations of the Coroner are reflected in the Health and Safety Plan of those contracted to the school to provide EOTC experiences (many of which are generic). *Recommendations attached to this newsletter*
2. That schools should not cancel or limit EOTC's experiences. As the editorial in the Dominion Post noted (31.3.10).
The lesson that should be taken from it is not that pupils should be denied adventure, but that those organising the adventure should take every possible step to reduce the danger to acceptable levels.

The Coroner noted:

'taking risks and experiencing the outdoors is a part of growing up.'

That is particularly so in New Zealand with its mountains, rivers, forests and wide open spaces (children, teenagers and in fact adults should be able to test themselves whether it be climbing trees, riding skateboards, scaling mountains or scabbling up stream beds wearing wetsuits, helmets and life vests. Life should not be lived in a glass bubble.

3. One of the key recommendations of the Coroner is that the Government consider licensing of outdoor education/adventure operations which provide activities to persons under 18 years of age to ensure minimum standards are met. The response to this recommendation from the Ministry of Education is I believe, unsatisfactory and yet another example of using 'Tomorrows Schools' to avoid what should be Government responsibility.

"Individual schools are responsible for the safety and security of children in their care"

Rawiri Brell,
Deputy Secretary of Early Childhood and Regional Education.

Yes, we are all acutely aware that schools are responsible for the safety and security of students but clearly the Ministry of Education which is a national organisation with huge resources ought not to abrogate its responsibility under the guise of 'Tomorrows Schools' on such important matters as student safety.

Opportunity

Asia: NZ Foundation would like to offer an opportunity for a Principal from SPANZ to attend a fully paid study tour to Korea in July this year. They run this opportunity in conjunction with the Korea Foundation each year for leaders/ senior teachers and educators.

There are more details and an application form at <http://www.asianz.org.nz/opportunities/educating-asia/korean-studies-workshop>

If you are interested in this opportunity, please also let Linda Tame know lta@lincoln.school.nz
Applications close on 28th April.

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Subject Categories of Technology

I attended a meeting on your behalf with the MOE and NZQA on the issue of establishing clearer structures for specialist learning in technology at senior secondary level.

A consultation paper will be out soon which I urge you to respond to. I made the following submissions on behalf of SPANZ:-

Although there are exciting developments in the Technology Curriculum which we support, there is an urgent need to address:

- Recruitment and retention of teachers in technology, particularly hard materials. Difficulties in obtaining LAT's from the NZTC aggravates the problem;
- We appreciate the roll out of 'broad band' but technology should be a separate cost centre in our operational grant including Professional Development. Adherence to the principle of a free education combined with the rapid changes in technology and its cost put a strain on our capacity to retain 'free education' in this important area.
- The technology standards must reflect our diverse learners including giving credits to students who are 'hands on', enjoy practical projects without a whole lot of theory as explained in many of the achievement standards.

National Standards – A Parental Responsibility Too!

As a number of year 7-13 Secondary Schools come to grips with their responsibility to report on national standards and give advice to parents on how to lift their child's performance, the following opinion piece is a good starting point:-

"There are many ways to be cruel to children. These include putting a television in their bedroom, showering them with electronic gizmos, showering them with money, driving them everywhere, and making them terrified of the world beyond their front door.

But just about the cruelest thing you can do to them, short of active physical abuse, is to fail to teach them to read, write and do maths.

Children are survivors. Evolution has tailored them to be resilient, and despite their parents, most kids turn out all right. They like to live and they enjoy the world. But if they cant read, write or do maths, they are disabled. They are unfitted for civilised society because civilised society is predicated on language first and maths second."

Joe Bennett
Christchurch Press 18/11/09

SPANZ Union

I am pleased to advise that I have signed the joint protocol with NZSPC . Tom Robson will be in contact with you shortly to advise on its contents. A consultation document will also go out on what might go into the claim.

If you wish to still join SPANZ Union please contact the SPANZ Office.

I hope Term two has started well for you all.

Kind regards

Patrick Walsh
President

