



SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President's Comment 27

Dear Colleagues

The Education Amendment Bill (No 3) introduced to the House earlier this week is possibly best described as legislation that attempts to tidy up a few loose ends and the overall impact on us will be relatively minor.

Key changes proposed in the bill relate to police vetting changes, information matching between the Teachers Council and the Ministry of Education, and the accountability for student attendance and engagement in our schools.

POLICE VETTING:

The proposal changes "will require the police vetting of only those non-teaching staff, contractors and volunteers who have, or are likely to have, unsupervised access to children during opening hours". Schools will not have to get police vets via the Teachers Council and will apply instead directly to the New Zealand Police, thus saving the \$10 fee. The new legislation will mean a reduction in the number of police vets required as many of our support staff who are currently vetted do not have unsupervised access to children.

Even though most secondary school sports teams and cultural groups operate outside of 'opening hours' it may be wise to have volunteer coaches and tutors police vetted to be on the safe side.

INFORMATION MATCHING (NZTC and MOE):

This change "will assist the Teachers Council to ensure that only registered teachers holding current practising certificates, or persons authorised by the Council to teach, are employed in teaching positions; and to enable the Ministry of Education to keep accurate registration information about teachers who are entitled to registration-dependent allowances". Currently neither the NZTC nor the MOE is able to identify the registration status of a teacher and the name of the school where the teacher is teaching because of different data collection requirements with teacher registration and payroll systems.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT:

It is proposed to remove the ability to provide early leaving exemptions for 15 year old students. This change is not surprising given the recent changed attitude by the ministry to approving these exemptions. The concern that I am sure we all share with this change is that these students often have special needs and circumstances and if they are to remain in school then there needs to be some recognition of the extra support that they need. Section 71 of the Act (relating to students on work experience) remains unchanged.

There are also proposed changes relating to monitoring student attendance including a requirement to contact parents on the first day that unexplained or unjustified absence is identified.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Gall".

Peter Gall
SPANZ President