



Kia ora Minister,

As the time draws closer for the announcement of the Reform of Vocational Education we seek your support and clarification on several matters.

### **Commitment to supporting regional communities**

We applaud your commitment to quality public tertiary education that is accessible to all, including regional communities. Access to public tertiary education should be available to all students regardless of their location. This is particularly relevant as tertiary institutions within small, regional communities have been disproportionately impacted under the current funding model. This is unacceptable. Any intended changes must be based on maintaining provision in every community that currently has access to tertiary education in the short term, and building provision into communities who currently have no tertiary provision in the medium term.

### **Support for existing staff**

Consolidating services should not automatically be construed as requiring large-scale job losses; the focus for the reforms should be on utilising the skills and knowledge of existing staff and supporting them into new roles as required. Therefore a high priority for the reforms must be retaining staff through redeployment opportunities. This will be a good outcome for affected staff and will also ensure the new entity is able to retain expertise as it moves through the transition stage and into implementation of new processes and systems. These redeployment opportunities should not be seen as "new positions" in any new entity; rather affected staff should be able to simply transfer to a new role, with the appropriate support and retraining as required.

### **Clarity of purpose**

Second, vocational education will only transform lives if there is a sound definition at the heart of all policy and implementation work. Attached is a definition that we think provides the soundest way forward for this sector, crafted by those who know the sector best – the staff in institutes of technology and polytechnics. We seek your support for this definition.

### **Quality, collaborative teaching delivery**

We are determined to ensure that all who benefit from vocational education can deliver what is needed. That means not only working together across the country but also respecting the diversity in each community's needs. There is no room for a 'lesson-in-a-box' approach when it comes to vocational education provision. Quality can only be maintained by ensuring academic rigour and auditing is left with the teaching staff. It also requires that the support services provided to our students are 'must haves' not 'nice to haves'.

## **Educational institutions must be adequately resourced**

Quality teaching and support services – including student support services – can only be provided if there are adequate resources. A decade of underfunding and continuous rounds of cuts to staffing has been devastating for students and communities. Much of this has occurred because private providers have been able to skim off profits by getting public funding for operating their private business. We urge you to provide public monies to public and community providers in tertiary education; to put a *r ā hui* or hold on any new approvals for Private Training Establishments (PTEs) or expansion of existing PTEs, at least for the period of the transition to the new structure; and, to work with us to develop a better funding model for the future.

Additionally, all teaching – on-job and on-campus – should be integrated into a single, public system. This means that current training provided by an ITO is brought into any new institution/s. We also urge you to support face-to-face provision. There has been a rapid move to on-line provision of teaching, learning, and even support services. Students have expressed concern that this makes them into second-class citizens.

## **Work in collaboration with the TEU**

Finally, we urge the government and its agencies to continue to work closely with unions representing staff in the sector.

As part of this, we urge you to set up a formal process to ensure that there is a transparent and fair transfer of any employees and their collective agreements as soon as possible. And there must be sufficient funding made available to support this work through the transition process, including time allowance for TEU branch representatives to full engage in the transition as leaders of the sector.

We know that you have been listening. We know it is not easy to focus on the right path with people seeking to politicise the future of our students. But it is the TEU membership - the people writing courses, administering finances, providing IT support, taking labs, providing counselling, cleaning halls of residence, entering grades, teaching in lecture theatres, and designing the programmes for online courses – who know how to create learning and research that benefits every community, whanau, iwi, and hāpu in Aotearoa.

We ask you commit again to supporting students, staff, and communities to create a stable, well-resourced, dynamic vocational education sector that is accessible to all.

Ngā mihi

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