



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

10 MAR 2015

National Office

Sector Enablement and Support

Phone: 0-4-463 8000

45-47 Pipitea Street

Fax: 0-4-463 8001

Thorndon

www.minedu.govt.nz

PO Box 1666

Wellington

New Zealand

File: 909175

Matthew Davies

Fyi-request-2486-

76a6ef68@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Davis

Thank you for your request of 9 February 2015 for the following information:

- *The report issued as a result of the Ministry of Education's investigation into allegations of bullying at Te Ra School.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

An investigation into Te Ra Waldorf School (Te Ra) was initiated by the Ministry of Education on 11 December 2013. This was in response to a complaint received by the Minister of Education alleging racist aspects in the Steiner belief system as espoused in anthroposophy, the special character of the school. The complainants claimed that the curriculum, learning and teaching at Te Ra was racist. The Ministry treats any allegations of racism in schools very seriously and will take action to investigate if a complaint is made.

The investigation at Te Ra found no evidence of racist elements within the school curriculum or in the delivery of the curriculum. We are satisfied that the school is operating as it should be.

The school, along with the Federation of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Schools in New Zealand, has written a formal response to the findings of the investigation. This response, along with a copy of the investigation report, is enclosed with this letter.

Thank you again for your request.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Casey

Deputy Secretary

Sector Enablement and Support

Encl

Confidential

Final report of investigation into a complaint against Te Ra School

Report to the Ministry of Education

Helena Barwick

16 June 2014

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Confidential

Contents

Contents.....	2
1. Background	3
2. Further investigation.....	3
3. This report.....	3
4. Further investigation of the complaint.....	4
4.1 Racism within Anthroposophy and Waldorf Pedagogy and its influence at Te Ra	4
4.2 How the School has dealt with this issue	5
4.3 The way forward.....	6
5. Response from the School.....	7
5.1 Further work in 2014.....	7
5.2 Curriculum development and pedagogy	7
5.3 Cultural competencies and community responsiveness	8
5.4 Review of special character guidelines.....	10
5.5 Additional comments	10
6. Contextual issues.....	11
6.1 The international debate about racism in Anthroposophy	11
6.2 Special character, the Integration Agreement and the Education Act.....	11
7. Summary and conclusions.....	12
Appendix 1: Statement from Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler	13
Appendix 2: Statement from Mana Māori.....	15

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

Confidential

Final report of investigation into complaint against Te Ra School

1. Background

In late November 2013 a complaint was sent to Minister Parata about Te Ra School. The complaint was by email and very brief. The substance of the complaint was that the education offered at Te Ra School is based on the views of Rudolph Steiner including views about a racial hierarchy. The complainants asserted that these views are not simply historical but are held by some teachers and are reflected within the curriculum.

Given the time of year, I was asked to conduct a preliminary investigation and report to the Ministry before Christmas. The preliminary investigation included discussions with the complainants and with the School along with a review of material provided by each party and by the Ministry of Education's Senior Advisor.

The findings of the preliminary investigation were that the complainants raised a genuine and valid concern about racist comments embedded in the Steiner philosophy of Anthroposophy with the Board and management of Te Ra School. Initially, the School's response to the complaints and the complainants was inadequate, resulting in a number of staff and several students and families leaving the School. From 2013 the School has taken the complaints more seriously and has taken meaningful steps to address the concerns.

The complainants were not satisfied with the findings of the preliminary report and wrote again to the Minister asking that the investigation continue.

2. Further investigation

In February 2104 I was asked to further investigate this complaint. The first step was to talk again with the complainants to gather a fuller picture of their concerns. In addition to talking further with them, discussions have involved group or individual conversations with:

- 5 current or ex-staff members some of whom are also parents of former students
- a group of ex-Mana Māori representatives (whose views are presented in Appendix B)
- 7 parents who have withdrawn students from the School.

All these people sought to have their views included in this investigation.

Following these conversations I provided an expanded summary of concerns (summarised in Section 4 of this report) to the Board Chair and Principal with an invitation for the School in whatever way it wanted to. The School's response is summarised in Section 5.

In addition to these conversations this phase of the investigation has involved familiarising myself with the international debate over racism within Anthroposophy, and with the protection of special character that is afforded to Te Ra and other integrated Schools through their integration agreements.

3. This report

This report includes

- further discussion of the concerns of complainants and other (Section 4)
- a response from the School (Section 5)

Confidential

- a summary of contextual issues including the international debate and the protection of special character (Section 6)
- findings and conclusions (Section 7).

Appended to the report are two statements. One from the initial complainants outlining the actions they believe are required to address the concerns they and others hold and one from Mana Māori.

4. Further investigation of the complaint

This section of the report gives further details of the concerns expressed by the original complainants and shared by others.

4.1 Racism within Anthroposophy and Waldorf Pedagogy and its influence at Te Ra
The complaint is specifically about racism within Anthroposophy and the influence of Anthroposophy on Waldorf pedagogy and on teaching and learning at Te Ra School.

The racism within Anthroposophy

Allegations of racism within Anthroposophy are not restricted to New Zealand and there is robust international debate on the matter. Among those worldwide who agree that racism can be found within Steiner teaching, positions range from those who acknowledge isolated words or phrases within Steiner's teaching could be 'interpreted as racist', to those who are deeply concerned about embedded beliefs about the value of different races and cultures. The complainants and others who have left the School are of the view that racism is embedded in Anthroposophy and Steiner's teaching.

Anthroposophy within Waldorf Pedagogy

One of those who spoke with me explained it as the curriculum being shaped by a historical picture of human evolution. Waldorf pedagogy is based on the child incarnating through three distinctive seven-year cycles; the theory being that an individual repeats in the first twenty years of life the spiritual-cultural evolution that humanity as a whole has undergone historically. An example given is the 'caves to cathedrals' picture often cited by teachers when talking with parents.

It was explained to me that within Waldorf pedagogy young children are believed to be in a state of 'collective or tribal consciousness' which directly relates to so-called 'primitive' or indigenous cultures. From here the child evolves to a more developed consciousness linked to civilisations such as Indian, Greeks and Romans until, by Class Seven, the child is pictured as person of the renaissance.

This hierarchy of races places darker-skinned people as naive and lighter skinned people as more enlightened. These two dimensions of evolutionary thought—the evolution through the races and the evolution of the child—are intertwined. The resulting pedagogy and curriculum is set within in a Eurocentric framework which raises concerns about the implications of this for both tangata whenua and others.

The influence of Anthroposophy at Te Ra

The complainants and others spoken to in this phase of the investigation, several of whom have been associated with Te Ra for a long time, are convinced that Anthroposophist thought and teaching underpins the pedagogy, the view of human development, the approach to children and the relationship with parents at Te Ra School. Because the influence of Anthroposophy on staff and practices at the School is not openly acknowledged or discussed, the complainants and others have found it difficult to engage the School in a discussion about the impacts of that influence.

Those I spoke to agreed that the School does not promote the full impact of Anthroposophy on Waldorf pedagogy to parents. Anthroposophy is promoted in lectures and parent meetings, but the former teachers described a culture where parts of Anthroposophy are deliberately not discussed with parents on the basis that only those with a 'deep' knowledge of the 'spiritual science' of

Confidential

Anthroposophy will understand it and others may 'misinterpret' the teaching. A parent of a former student said this:

When you join the School community as a parent your understanding of Anthroposophy is very partial and it takes some time to become aware of how Anthroposophical teaching impacts on the curriculum.¹

Furthermore, because Anthroposophy is a 'spiritual science' the spiritual nature of the philosophy makes it somewhat impervious to critique. I was told that Anthroposophists claim Steiner's original theories and concepts were examined through his 'exacting clairvoyant scientific research', something which is difficult to define and even more difficult to question.

Many of those interviewed for this report spoke of the things they valued about the School and some of their sadness at having to leave.

4.2 How the School has dealt with this issue

Of almost as much concern to those I have spoken with is the way the School has responded when individuals and groups have attempted to explore the issue of racism within Anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy with the School.

Initially, many thought it would be straightforward to get rid of racism from the pedagogy. The first surprise to them was that most of the Faculty denied that racism was present. One person said this:

We were very hopeful in the beginning. We thought this would be easy to fix – people would see the racism in Anthroposophy, reject it and work hard to make sure it had no place in anything the School did. That wasn't the response we got, the response we got was 'By saying these things you are hurting us, we love your children'. There simply wasn't a willingness to engage with the issue.

Another initially looked to the School to provide leadership in this international issue:

A really willing School would lead the change. We fought, we fought without igniting the spark of desire for real change.

Although shocked, not all were surprised by the School's response to the issue given their own experiences of trying to raise these concerns and other issues with the School.

I brought up very clearly, in writing, what I thought was wrong. I posed it as questions I wanted answers to. The only answer I got was that I didn't understand, I had misinterpreted it.

Individuals have terrible trouble with the School. It's not until you get together and talk about it that you realise it's not just you. Because of the secrecy everyone bottles alone.

As staff members it became very uncomfortable to work at Te Ra if colleagues got the sense that you were prepared to consider whether the allegations of racism had any basis.

Several of those I spoke to were particularly distressed by the way the School has responded to those who have raised the question of racism in the School.

¹ All of the quotes used in this report are taken from people other than the two original complainants.

Confidential

Their [the School's] way of dealing with the criticism has been to ostracise, vilify and exclude anyone who takes issue with them.

For me it came to a head when I saw how Krissy and Sophie were treated. I didn't want my children to be part of a place where good people can be treated like that.

A number of those who spoke with me said that they and others who have left the School because of either their concerns about the pedagogy, or about the way the School responded to questions about the pedagogy, have not given that as the reason. Some people said that it had not 'felt safe' to tell the School why they were leaving. Here is one comment:

My experience of complaining to the School has been so unsuccessful. When we decided to leave I just didn't have the energy to tell them why. They will have no record of why we left.

Some former parents and staff members acknowledge that, to an extent, the School has tried to address the allegations that have been raised. However, although some consider the School's intent is genuine, they do not believe that the steps that have been taken will get to the root of the problem. This is one comment:

The steps that have been taken by the School to address the allegations of racism are half-hearted, it's like pulling teeth. Because they don't understand the problem, they can't fix it. There is no real community conversation taking place because they do not see there is a problem.

All of those who contributed to this summary agree that no review of the curriculum or the pedagogy conducted by the School is going to be adequate because the School can and will only be able to look through the lens of Anthroposophy and will not be able to stand outside in order to critique it.

Some former members of Mana Māori talked to me what was for them a very painful process of working with the School to develop the *Declaration Against Discrimination* that was issued by the School in November 2012. Mana Māori went through a three-month process with the School to reach the *Declaration* which in the end they described as 'a compromise on both sides'.

Most disheartening for Mana Māori was that when the *Declaration* was finalised and Mana Māori wanted to take it back to the parent community for discussion, the School did not wish to make it public. Under pressure from Mana Māori, the School then wanted to simply present it and not enter into dialogue with parents about it. The School did not want Mana Māori to have an active voice in the presentation. It consigned the group to the role of silent support, with a karakia to begin and end the presentation of the *Declaration*. Mana Māori is of the view that the School's behaviour at that point contradicted the *Declaration*.

4.3 The way forward

Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler, the original complainants, still want to find a resolution to this issue. Both of them can still talk positively about their involvement with Te Ra and the many strengths of the School. However, they are resolute in their belief that the influence of Anthroposophy and in particular the racist perspectives within it is harmful for children and families in bicultural Aotearoa. Sophie and Krissy have summarised their position and what they see as the way forward. Their report is attached as Appendix 1.

Confidential

5. Response from the School

5.1 Further work in 2014

Following more conversations with the original complainants and meetings with a number of other ex-parents and ex-staff members earlier this year a summary of further concerns and issues raised (Section 4) was provided to the Principal and Board Chair with an invitation to Te Ra to respond in whatever way it wanted to.

The response came in the form of a meeting with the Principal, members of the Board and College in late May 2014, a conversation with the Student Achievement Function (SAF) Practitioner and the provision of a range of School planning and review documents.

At the meeting with the Board the Principal opened the Board's response with this comment acknowledging the issue and its widespread implications:

The complaints are going really wide from philosophy to pedagogy to employment matters. The racism in the source text has been carried into the wider arena. Every Steiner school is doing work on this. The racism in the source texts cannot be undone, what matters is what we do with it and what we don't do with it.

The Board again acknowledged that the School's initial response to the racism concerns raised by complainants was slow, and when it came the response was unsatisfactory. It further recognised that the process of drafting and presenting the Declaration was not well handled by the School. The School understands and accepts much responsibility for the hurt that was caused to those involved and says that out of this came a recognition that transparency and communication between the School and its community did need to be improved and that work is being done.

Several times in the course of the conversation the comments were made to the effect that, 'It took us a while to wake up'.

The meeting described the several strands of work underway to address the issues. The most significant of these are the curriculum development work happening within the School and at a national level through the Federation of New Zealand Steiner Schools; the review of Te Ra's special character guidelines led by the Kapiti Waldorf Trust; and, the work that has been pursued under the guidance of the SAF to develop teachers' cultural competencies and the School's community responsiveness. These work streams are all embedded in the 2014 Charter in these words:

Going on to 2014 and beyond, three main focus areas have been identified through community processes in 2013: curriculum development in view of the Māori perspective; articulation and understanding of the School's special character; developing bi-cultural partnership and participation as a strong culture at all levels of the School's operations and processes. (Te Ra Charter 2014)

5.2 Curriculum development and pedagogy

As described in the Dec 2013 report, the School had already completed a curriculum review which resulted in revised curriculum guidelines. Further work in this area is indicated in the 2014 Charter which includes the following strategic objective under the curriculum goal:

A New Zealand Waldorf curriculum is delivered at Te Ra, arising out of Anthroposophy and applied within the context of the Kapiti Coast and Aotearoa.

- A strong, integrated Maori content is evident: perspective, tikanga, te reo, kapa haka
- Curriculum content and delivery ensure that students develop an understanding of New Zealand's identity as a Pacific nation with a bi-cultural foundation and a multi-cultural

Confidential

society. (Te Ra Charter 2014)

Curriculum development work is also underway at a Federation level. This will be furthered early in July when several staff members will attend The Federation of New Zealand Steiner Schools' Pedagogical Conference for Teachers of Classes 1-8. The title and the theme of this year's conference is *Meeting Diversity: Steiner Education for 21st Century Aotearoa NZ*. This is the theme of the keynote address and one of the workshops and is described in this way:

Meanwhile, since the 2013 annual Federation council meeting, conversations have begun on ways in which we can more meaningfully and visibly articulate an expression of Steiner Education in this country that is responsive to the unique environment of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Against this backdrop schools have begun to collaborate in the development of new curriculum documents and the call has come from our teachers for new and practical ways to deepen their understanding of Steiner/Waldorf pedagogy and curriculum.

5.3 Cultural competencies and community responsiveness

Working with the SAF has been a major component of addressing the concerns raised by the complainants. Led by the SAF, the School identified two priorities for this work which are:

- To develop a culture of a genuine, trusting partnership between whānau, the wider community and the School.
- To develop staff's cultural and linguistic competence with a focus on Māori as Tangata Whenua.

A Change Team was convened made up of staff, Board members, Mana Māori representatives and parents of students at the School. A Change Plan was developed with a set of specific, scheduled actions designed to take the School towards these two goals.

The SAF's work at the School recently concluded with the development of a Sustainability Plan. The Sustainability Plan includes review and evaluation of progress against the Change Plan, specifies where ongoing change is built into the School's planning documents and identifies resources and support that is needed for progress to continue.

The SAF reported that she is very encouraged by the way the School has been open to change. With regard to the relationship with the community, she sees promising indications of a more consultative approach but is aware that consulting with the community, or even at times with staff, has not always previously been the School's way and that a more consultative, inclusive style of operation may not yet be embedded. She reported that the work on cultural competencies was much needed and has got off to a strong start, but that there is much more work to be done.

The SAF will make periodic contact with the School and has indicated a willingness to re-engage if necessary.

This work strand is also embedded in the 2014 Charter with these Charter goals.

Confidential

Treaty of Waitangi

- To recognise our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi by ensuring that every pupil is enriched by an environment that values and reflects New Zealand's bicultural heritage
- To promote and support Maori educational initiatives to increase participation for our Maori children and our other children consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the Waldorf Curriculum

Equity

- To positively promote equity issues, celebrating differences and openly accepting all cultures and beliefs within the framework of our 'Special Character' whilst acknowledging the unique place of Maori and New Zealand's role in the Pacific as a member of the international community of nations

Community Participation

- To acknowledge that education is a three-way partnership between parents/caregivers, teachers, and pupils
- To maintain an open and supportive relationship with the School's community so that the educational needs and wishes of this community can be understood
- To draw upon the skills, resources, and wisdom of the community and invite participation where appropriate
- To ensure that if things go wrong, procedures are in place to deal with issues effectively.

The actions required to strengthen relationships with the School community, in particular with Māori, are further specified in the 2014 Annual Plan in this way:

1. Identify, promote and employ appropriate and effective communication and consultation pathways which enable participation of, and partnership with Māori whānau.
 - **Process:** BoT to work with whānau (Mana Māori)
 - **Outcome:** A protocol is documented by the BoT, which will also be followed when consulting with whānau during the development of the Strategic Plan 2015-2018
2. Make the vision statement of Te Ra as a New Zealand Waldorf School more visible in an artistic and creative manner in the School's buildings and surroundings
 - **Process:** BoT / College to explore with the community ways to design and fund developments
 - **Outcome:** Increased visible Maori presence in the School in various ways and media (i.e., pou, signage, sculptures).
3. Continue to develop an enduring relationship with the manawhenua (Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira²).
 - **Process:** BoT / CoT to work with Mana Maori to discuss options for building stronger relationships with manawhenua.
 - **Outcome:** Staff, whānau, and students have a deeper understanding of the history of the manawhenua.
4. Continue to develop community, Board, staff, whānau, and student understanding of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in a contemporary and local context
 - **Process:** Teachers work to implement the tenets of Ka Hikitia in their programmes and practices
 - **Process:** Treaty workshops are organised for staff and Board members, and the community respectively
 - **Outcome:** All whānau have had an opportunity to explore the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi through workshops

Confidential

5.4 Review of special character guidelines

The Kapiti Waldorf Trust, parents and staff have been engaged in reviewing the special character guidelines. While this process has been done before, this time there has been a deliberate effort to be inclusive and the Board is of the view that the active engagement of families as well as staff, the College of Teachers, the Trust itself has enriched the process significantly.

The process being used is an iterative one and is not yet complete. The review of special character is also embedded in the School's Charter.

5.5 Additional comments

There are aspects of the complainants' perspective that the meeting did agree with, for example, that the spiritual nature of Anthroposophy can render it somewhat impervious to critique and in response the Board made it clear that Te Ra does not consider itself bound by Steiner's words nor does it take them as dogma. On the other hand, there are a number of aspects in the further report on the concerns of the complainants and others that the School considers to be factual errors, and other things it does not agree with, but the group indicated that they do not think it is a productive path to argue and contest the complainants' perspective. They regret that the breakdown in relationships has prevented the complainants and others who have left the School from seeing the progress that has been made.

They haven't been with us on the journey that we have been on. They are demanding the change but they haven't been here to see that it is happening.

Someone else added:

As a School we are moving actively and consciously towards a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Basically, the problem of racism is right on top of everyone's consciousness.

Another person at the meeting described it this way:

It has been a real shaking up, but it is invigorating. What is happening needed to happen – we can see that now.

The group described the huge amount of energy that teachers, staff, parents, proprietors and others have put in to these issues over the past year and the consensus is that it has been exhausting. While there is complete agreement that it has been necessary, there is a view that it is not sustainable and that some energy needs to be directed towards improving other areas of the School.

In terms of the way forward, the complainants have made it clear that their concerns are wider than Te Ra School and have implications for all state-funded Waldorf institutions in New Zealand. However, in relation to the School, the complainants' specific request is that:

The current process of investigation into Te Ra School should continue but also should include someone within the Ministry who is willing to get to grips with the racist aspects of anthroposophy and how these aspects are contributing to the pedagogy and culture of all state-funded Waldorf institutions in New Zealand today.

The Board said that the School is open to review of any kind. It reiterated that significant internal and some external review from the Ministry of Education has already occurred, but accepts that this may not allay concerns about the 'anthroposophical lens' of those undertaking those reviews. It would willingly engage with further review if that would provide assurance that the concerns raised by the complainants have been taken seriously and are being addressed.

Confidential

6. Contextual issues

6.1 The international debate about racism in Anthroposophy

This complaint was focused on racism at Te Ra School. It is clear the issues need to be placed in the wider context of the international debate. It is not within the scope of this investigation to enter, or take a position in this debate which has been running for many years, but it is important for the investigation to acknowledge that the debate is an active one.

Accusations of racism have long dogged the Steiner School movement. These are based on the assertion that Steiner believed that different races were at different levels of the spiritual hierarchy, with 'Aryans' being the highest incarnation. In his review of Ansgar Martins' scholarly text designed to identify the ambivalent strands in Steiner's thinking, Peter Staudenmaier summarises Steiner's views on races and racial evolution in this way:

"External racial characteristics reflect internal spiritual qualities; different racial groups represent different levels of spiritual development; some racial groups carry evolutionary progress forward while other racial groups are degenerating and devolving; the 'white race' (or 'Aryan race' or 'Caucasian race' or 'European peoples') are 'normal' and the race of the future in contrast to the 'coloured races' and the fundamental hierarchy of 'lower races' and 'higher races' as an expression of spiritual regression or advance."³

However, the same review goes on to outline Martins' argument that as Steiner's views developed he increasingly distanced himself from theosophical concepts of racial evolution and that racial categories eventually became marginal to Steiner's cosmology. If this is an accurate assessment of the shifts in attitude through Steiner's life and reflected in his writings, a final determination on the extent of racism within Anthroposophy will continue to be difficult.

6.2 Special character, the Integration Agreement and the Education Act

As an Integrated School Te Ra has statutory protection of its special character under Part 1 S3 of the *Private Schools Conditional Integration Act* (1975). However, Part 1 S4 of the same legislation makes it clear that integrated Schools are fully bound by all provisions of the Education Act and any regulations made under that Act.

The Fourth Schedule to the Deed of Integration for Te Ra School signed in 1996 describes the School's special character. It is explicit that *'teaching, management and administration at the School is based on Anthroposophy'* and that, *'Rudolf Steiner's educational writings and lectures are the foundation and heart of the curriculum'*. Further, it makes explicit the link between child development and human evolution of by saying, *'the curriculum allows the child to grow in knowledge in the same way as humankind as a whole developed from picture-consciousness in ancient times towards an ever-increasing rational consciousness in modern times'*.

The National Education Goals, New Zealand Curriculum and National Administration Guidelines, three of the five branches of the National Education Guidelines, are mandated in the Education Act. They require that New Zealand schools respect the Treaty of Waitangi, acknowledge New Zealand's bicultural heritage and pay particular attention to the progress and achievement of Maori students and other priority groups.

National Education Goal 9 charges schools to prioritise, *'Increased participation and success by Māori through the advancement of Māori education initiatives, including education in Te Reo Māori,*

³ Staudenmaier P (Dec 2012) " . . .out of the frying pan and into the fire" Rassismus und Geschichtsmetaphysik: Esoterischer Darwinismus und Freiheitsphilophie bei Rudolf Steiner (2012)

Confidential

consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The New Zealand Curriculum *'acknowledges the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand'* as one of its principles and requires that *'all students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga'*. The National Administration Guidelines require all schools to consult with their Maori communities, to prioritise support for Maori and Pasifika students and other groups who may be at risk of not achieving, and to monitor and report the achievement of these groups of students.

7. Summary and conclusions

It is clear there is a worldwide debate on the extent and influence of racism within the writing of Rudolf Steiner. It is also clear that the special character of Te Ra School, based explicitly on Anthroposophy and the writing of Rudolf Steiner, is protected through legislation and the School's integration agreement.

Equally, it is clear that the New Zealand education system into which Te Ra has been integrated recognises the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural nature of Aotearoa. New Zealand state and state integrated schools are required to respect, protect and promote the rights of Māori to equitable outcomes from our education system, and to ensure all students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of Māori language and culture.

What is less clear is whether and how practice at Te Ra School is influenced by the racism that has been found within Steiner's writing and is therefore embedded in the Anthroposophical worldview. The complainants who initially raised the concerns and have pursued this complaint have not been able to provide many specific instances of ways in which racism has been manifest in teaching or behaviour management. However, these complainants have repeated that their prime concern is that those responsible for teaching and nurturing children at Te Ra and in other Steiner institutions in New Zealand are, by their training and background, imbued with a worldview underpinned with a hierarchy of races that sees indigenous races as having lesser value. While this may be so for some or all of those teaching at Te Ra there is currently no requirement or mechanism to audit the beliefs held by teachers in New Zealand's schools.

That said, when the concerns were first raised by these complainants, more than two years ago, Te Ra's response was poor. The problem was denied and those raising it were vilified to the point where their continued involvement with the School became untenable for them and for many others. The School regrets the way the concerns were handled and accepts much responsibility for the poor response that led to many families losing faith in the School.

However, this investigation has found clear indications that Te Ra has taken the concerns much more seriously in the last nine months and a number of work streams are underway to explore and address the School's response to being part of a bi-cultural society. The initiatives underway are described in the body of this report and have been built into the School's planning and reporting documents which is an indication that they are not just one-off responses. It is clear there is much more work to do and there is a commitment to do it.

The rupture in the relationship between the complainants, other dissatisfied families and the School has meant that those with concerns may well not be aware of the work being done by staff, parents and proprietors or of the shift in the positions of many of those involved.

In conclusion, the concerns raised by Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler have substance and they are part of a worldwide issue. The writings of Rudolf Steiner are at the heart of the special character of Te Ra School, protected through the integration agreement, and some aspects of those writings are not compatible with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand's education system. Te Ra School has acknowledged the issue and is working to ensure that no racist ideology is reflected in the curriculum or in teaching and that the School embraces and promotes the bicultural nature of New Zealand.

Confidential

Appendix 1: Statement from Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler

14 March 2014

To: Minister for Education, Hekia Parata; Helena Barwick, current investigator of the complaint for the Ministry of Education; and all other relevant parties

Re: The continued investigation into the complaint made by Krissy Dussler and Sophie Perkins

With regard to our complaint to the Ministry and ensuing proposals, we would like to reiterate the need for a transparent, thorough examination of anthroposophy and the role it plays in establishing the pedagogy of Steiner Schools. We are aware that the spiritual picture of anthroposophy is complex and that the examination of it is filled with difficulties and sensitive issues, such as the freedom to personal beliefs.

Within the setting of education, however, we cannot label anthroposophy as merely a personal belief system. To the contrary, it is a well-established and institutionalised spiritual path that informs and inspires the pedagogy and the ingrained culture of what are state-funded institutions. Therefore, no matter how complex or fraught with difficulty, this investigation is essential to ensuring that the children who attend Steiner Schools receive the same protections as those in other state-funded Schools.

There is a danger that, to avoid the pain of the process of investigation of the spiritual path, which sits so closely to Steiner teachers' personal reality, the changes Steiner Schools and institutions might choose to make will be add-ons, even if done with good intention. Therefore, any investigation needs to be sturdy, independent and unbiased to ensure that the core issue of racism within anthroposophy is identified and removed.

Following our own research, we are aware that previous international non-anthroposophically led investigations have found it difficult to offer working solutions to the problem of racism within Steiner's philosophy because the racial component of anthroposophy is wide-reaching and affects the fundamental pedagogy of Steiner Schools. For example, Rudolf Steiner's notion of the pre-School child (what we call today a "kindergarten child"), is that he or she is in a stage of "tribal" or "group" consciousness. The child then develops out of this stage, reflecting a more "advanced" stage of human evolution, which the curriculum then reflects and assists. What does this racially charged terminology and philosophy mean for contemporary indigenous cultures, and what worldview is this reinforcing in the teachers who look through this lens?

In response to Helena Barwick's request, we have arrived at the following. Given the complexity of the issue, these recommendations are by no means conclusive. They are instead a suggested beginning:

What are the realistic options for resolving this matter to our satisfaction?

1. The Federation and Te Ra School need to be open, cooperative and willing to examine the actual lens of anthroposophy and how this affects pedagogy. If you try to enhance cultural understanding (i.e., Māoritanga) but still maintain the unqualified lens of anthroposophy, you avoid addressing the issue. The racism sits within anthroposophy; therefore, it is that part that needs to be pruned.
2. Adding things to the curriculum, however laudable, does not satisfy us. It is what needs to be *removed* that is of importance. For example, bringing Te Reo Māori into Class 1 as

Confidential

subject without acknowledgment of why it has not been there in the past (and a transparency that acknowledges the change in pedagogical understanding), means that this advance can be easily lost in the future because there is no reference point marking the shift. In this specific case, what needed to be removed was the pedagogical stance that supported the idea that Te Reo Maori in Class 1 was not appropriate to be taught as a language for children of this age and stage, unlike the German language which was considered appropriate.

- a) to clarify the example further, we would like to add we have heard reference to the pedagogical stance that said Maori was not appropriate for Class 1 children (regarding the sound of the language and content of tikanga Maori, including myths, legends and haka), from: Taruna, the Steiner teacher training center; overseas anthroposophical teachers; and teachers within the School itself.
- b) this is one example of many, and
- c) we do not wish this example to be the sole focus of the report, the concern is wider than that.

3. The Ministry of Education needs to be an active participant in this process, with one aim being to understand the complications within anthroposophy and how this affects education.

4. All government-funded anthroposophical institutions (i.e., Taruna, Hohepa Farms, and Waldorf Schools) need to understand the issue of racism within anthroposophy and how it affects pedagogy, and be committed to deleting it from their philosophy.

What process should be followed to identify and eradicate racism in institutions guided by anthroposophy?

1. The current process of investigation into Te Ra School should continue but also should include someone within the Ministry who is willing to get to grips with the racist aspects of anthroposophy and how these aspects are contributing to the pedagogy and culture of all state-funded Waldorf institutions in New Zealand today.

2. The Ministry needs to stipulate to all state-funded anthroposophical institutions the changes they need to make in order to remain funded.

Now that this issue has been brought to the Ministry's attention we believe it is unacceptable to allow these dangerous and repugnant ideas to hide behind the "Special character" status of Steiner Schools and institutions. The same rules must apply to Steiner special character Schools as to state Schools.

We personally believe that with persistence, openness and courage, it will be possible to examine and prune the problematic aspects of anthroposophy from Waldorf Schools and institutions in New Zealand, enabling a continued fostering of the many positive practices that the Steiner philosophy has to offer within an educational arena.

Sincerely,

Krissy Dussler and Sophie Perkins

Confidential

Appendix 2: Statement from Mana Māori

Introduction

Mana Māori was formed to address a lack of Te Reo Māori and tikanga in Te Ra School. The group was instrumental in bringing the former Māori teacher into the School, and said that the introduction of a Māori dimension to School life was welcomed by students and families at the School.

The five former members of Mana Māori who contributed to this statement clearly indicated that it was the racist ideologies of anthroposophy embedded in the Waldorf education system, and Te Ra School's denial and subsequent sabotage of Mana Māori's efforts to address these racist ideologies that eventually forced them from the School. They made this choice because they had grave concerns about the cultural safety of their children and their families, and they felt unable to continue in an environment that would not allow anthroposophy to be questioned. After attempting to work with the School to address the presence of these racist beliefs and after encountering much resistance from the School, all these five former members of Mana Māori now see anthroposophy as corrupt, dangerous and injurious to Māori and firmly believe that it should not be part of any education system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Two main areas of concern emerged from the meeting with Mana Maori:

1. How anthroposophical beliefs affect teaching and learning at Te Ra (and the lack of transparency around this).
2. The defensive and obstructive way in which the School dealt with Mana Māori's questions and concerns.

1. How anthroposophical beliefs affect teaching and learning at Te Ra

Anthroposophy is a religious belief system that sees its founder Rudolf Steiner as its prophet. Anthroposophy informs Waldorf Schools' educational practices and institutional structures. Although this translation of anthroposophy into Waldorf education are not made transparent by the leadership and current staff of Te Ra to parents, there is a direct correlation between the beliefs, values and attitudes of anthroposophy and the structure and operational practices of Te Ra.

Central to anthroposophical belief is Steiner's theory of the evolution of human consciousness. In a nutshell, this is based on a theory of reincarnation, wherein a person is born first as a dark-skinned person, and then works his or her way through different incarnations of gradually lightening folk until they reach the ultimate goal of being born white with a consequently higher level of consciousness. This progression is reflected in Steiner kindergartens and Schools, with it being likened to the stages of development of the growing child. The consciousness of the younger child is associated with an earlier stage of human consciousness, and finds itself reflected in what anthroposophy considers to be less advanced races and cultures. For example, tribal cultures have attributed to them a 'group consciousness', rather than an individual one, and are seen to correlate with early childhood and kindergarten ages. This unsophisticated structure places darker-skinned people as naive and lighter skinned people as more enlightened. These two dimensions of evolutionary thought—the evolution through the races and the evolution of the child—are intertwined.

Through the 12 months in which Mana Māori engaged with the issues surrounding these racist ideologies in anthroposophy, the group arrived at the conclusion that anthroposophy is corrupt and dangerous for all people but it has specific implications for the indigenous people of Aotearoa. Mana Māori saw that it creates an environment within the School that is tailored by imperialist ideologies that give the predominantly non-Māori community a skewed perception of Māori and Māori cultural practices, and of what a constructive, healthy and inclusive engagement with the tangata whenua should be.

Confidential

Transparency

The group agreed that the School provides very limited information to parents regarding Anthroposophy. In fact, the teachers present at the meeting described a culture where Anthroposophy is deliberately not discussed with parents on the basis that only those with a deep knowledge of the 'spiritual science' of Anthroposophy – for example the evolutionary concepts and other aspects – teachers should not discuss it. An Anthroposophical School doctor told staff "you don't talk about anthroposophy with the parents". A parent group member agreed that it was difficult to get information about Anthroposophy, saying: "When you join the School community as a parent your understanding of Anthroposophy is very partial—it is what the School enables us to see—and it takes some time if ever to become aware of how Anthroposophical teaching impacts on the curriculum and the understanding of child development."

Some of those who adhere to Anthroposophy take the view that a full understanding of this "spiritual science" takes 30 years or more. Parents are therefore not expected to attain a true understanding of it and as a result parents' concerns are often marginalised because their limited understanding of Anthroposophy does not allow them to be equal partners in the discussion of teaching practices, content and child management. This was felt as Mana Māori suggestions and contributions were slotted into their place within Anthroposophy.

Mana Māori says there is a tolerance for ambiguity and lack of clarity because of the view that as those with an Anthroposophical world view evolve, apparent contradictions will be resolved and clarity will emerge. There is also a sense that because Steiner gained his knowledge in a spiritual way the knowledge must be trusted rather than questioned.

2. The way in which Mana Māori parents' questions and concerns have been received by the School

Initially Mana Māori thought it would be straightforward to get rid of racism from the pedagogy. The first surprise for members was that most of the faculty denied that racism was present. Then, as time went on Mana Māori realised that there was more to this issue than simply "removing the books" containing the racist teachings from the parent library (which was one of the initial responses from the School).

From the beginning, Mana Māori was tasked with understanding Steiner's dangerous ideas on the evolution of consciousness and the hierarchy of race, and how these teachings had manifested themselves in the current curriculum and teaching practices at Te Ra and the wider Waldorf pedagogy. An indigenous perspective is not present in the curriculum and even though other cultures are subjects of study they are presented from an Anthroposophical perspective and viewed as representing the developmental stage of the child that correlates to the stage of the evolution of consciousness that a particular culture represents. The culture that is represented through study is chosen for its correlation to the child's stage of development.

Mana Māori discussed what was for them a very painful process of working with the School to develop the Declaration Against Discrimination that was issued by the School in November 2012. Mana Māori went through a three-month process with the School to reach the Declaration, often meeting two or three times a week as well as having meetings at the School. However, in the end they describe the Declaration as a compromise on both sides.

Most disheartening for Mana Māori was that when the Declaration was finalised and Mana Māori wanted to take it back to the parent community for discussion, the School did not wish to make it public. Under pressure from Mana Māori, the School then wanted to simply present it and not enter into dialogue with parents about it. The School did not want Mana Māori to have an active voice in the presentation. It consigned the group to the role of silent support, with a karakia to begin and end

Confidential

the presentation of the Declaration. Mana Māori is of the view that the School's behaviour at that point contradicted the Declaration.

The School did undertake a curriculum review but as it was conducted by Anthroposophists, Mana Māori believes the reviewers would have had difficulty seeing where the problems lie. The School was adamant that a review should only be undertaken by School staff members. Mana Māori has always said that a curriculum review must be independent. While Mana Māori would still like to see a review of the curriculum by educationalists outside Anthroposophy, they are no longer convinced that taking the curriculum apart and rebuilding it will address the issue, as teachers continue to be trained in Waldorf pedagogy underpinned by Anthroposophical views. Mana Māori sees attempts by the School to deal with this matter as belated, weak and devoid of any real understanding or acceptance of the problem. Efforts by the School to address the issue are of a defensive nature and amount to no more than lip service and tinkering with wording.

Throughout this process Mana Māori saw a clear division develop between those staff and parents who questioned Anthroposophy and the leadership of the School, and the remaining staff who followed the School's position blindly. The School made clear efforts to present the problem as being the questioning staff and parents, of whom Mana Māori was central, rather than the issue of racism itself. Ideas took a grip in the School community that the dissenters were trying to turn Te Ra "into a Māori School", or were "trying to destroy our School". Effectively the School says there is no racism and the statements by Rudolf Steiner are reflective of their time. This was not the experience of Mana Māori over this issue.

Mana Māori is also concerned about the School's communications with its community which, according to this group, reflect the School's reluctance to properly air and debate this issues. The School has never produced a clear and satisfactory debrief of the issues and has been very reticent in acknowledging to parents why staff have resigned and 29 families have removed their children from the School. When questioned about the exodus, one teacher replied 'We don't know why families are leaving' (curriculum meeting, June 2013).

3. Summary

Concerns about racism in Anthroposophy are not unique to Te Ra but are a local manifestation of a world-wide issue. As families who have found much in Steiner philosophy that they do value, Mana Māori hoped that Te Ra would provide leadership in working to resolve the issues. They have found this not to be the case. As one member of the group put it:

"What can happen? A really willing School would lead the change. We fought, we fought without igniting the spark of desire for real change."

In the view of Mana Māori, Te Ra does not have a culture where open debate and sharing of ideas is welcomed. Their experience is that dissenting voices are isolated and excluded. Parent questioning of philosophy or approaches was not, and is not, welcomed. One member said this:

"The School talks about community and we went to Te Ra thinking we could have a say, but when you come up against something like this you realise that your views are not welcome."

Teachers explained that while debate within the staffroom takes place, it is within the context of Anthroposophy and does not question the parameters. They have a perception that they are open, but they are only open within their framework.

Mana Māori, March 2014

**RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT
OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO A COMPLAINT AGAINST TE RA SCHOOL
BY HELENA BARWICK**

Introduction

- 1 This response is made by the Federation of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Schools in New Zealand ("the Federation") and Te Ra School ("Te Ra"), to the report of Helena Barwick to the Ministry of Education dated 16 June 2014. This report was the final report on Ms. Barwick's investigation into a complaint against Te Ra School.

Discussion of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Pedagogy

- 2 The Federation/Te Ra is deeply concerned about the discussion in the report of Anthroposophy; the allegation of racism within Anthroposophy; the relationship between Anthroposophy and Waldorf Pedagogy; and Anthroposophy at Te Ra. These themes are primarily discussed at parts 4.1 and 6; and in the Summary and Conclusions at 7. The Federation/Te Ra objects to these parts of the report, on the grounds that they contain a number of highly contentious and potentially damaging propositions; and:
- (a) The author has not provided references for many of these statements and it is unclear what the source is – whether it is one of the complainants, a former parent, or independent research the author has conducted - and therefore how reliable the statement is.
 - (b) In some instances, unsubstantiated allegations are presented as statements of fact (for example the explanation for the so-called hierarchy of races at page 4).
 - (c) The report fails to balance these controversial allegations about Anthroposophy with a complete explanation of the alternative view. Against the incorrect and misleading recounting of Steiner's theories at 4.1 and 6.1; there is only one paragraph which attempts to present an alternative, more accurate interpretation (the third paragraph at 6.1).
 - (d) The author reaches a number of conclusions in the Summary and Conclusions section at page 12 which are not supported by the facts or any of the preceding analysis.
- 3 The cumulative effect of these defects is that the report contains errors, is unbalanced, misleading and unfair.
- 4 In this paper the Federation and Te Ra set out their detailed response to the report (adopting the same headings as the report).

"The racism within Anthroposophy" (4.1)

- 5 The Federation/Te Ra objects to this heading, which suggests a finding of fact – that there is racist ideology or doctrine in Anthroposophy. The author acknowledges later in her report (at 6.1) that it is not within the scope of the report to "take a position in this debate which has been running for many years" and that "a final determination on the extent of racism within Anthroposophy will continue to be difficult." In that case, the phrase in the heading should be a question, not a statement.
- 6 The Federation/Te Ra rejects any suggestion that Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy promotes a view which denies the universal nature of humanity; or which asserts

superiority of one "race" or social group over another; or justifies prejudicial judgements or preferential treatment based on the grounds of "race"; or proposes the harm to or denial of rights, needs, dignity or the value of others.

- 7 To the contrary, Steiner was opposed to ideologies such as "racism" which are held dogmatically irrespective of evidence, and contain a principle of harm. Steiner asserted the principle of universal humanity that joins all "races" in unity. He denied the principle of biological determinism of either intelligence or culture; and upheld the view that all "races" and social groups have positive qualities which all could learn from each other; and promoted principles of benevolence and the self-determination of the individual. During a period when colonialism, nationalism and imperialism were very much in evidence he wrote:¹

True internationalism... springs from a love which goes out to all peoples and races in order that the light received from them may be kindled in the deeds, concepts and creations of one's own people. Each individual race must so find its place in the great chorus of the peoples on the Earth that it contributes to the full understanding which can alone unite them all in real and mutual knowledge... The evolution of the age, with all the terrible paralysis that is appearing at the present time, places a solemn duty before the soul: to gather together all that can unite mankind in love and array it in opposition to the destructive elements that have made their appearance in recent times. This quest for loving unification, for unifying love is not merely a vague feeling. To those who understand the conditions of life today, it is the very highest duty of man."

- 8 It is unclear precisely what is meant by the terms "racism" or "race" or "racist" in the Barwick report; which are not defined. Steiner did not refer to "race" in the modern sociological meaning of the term. He only spoke of biological "races" on a very small number of occasions, and the concept of biological "races" is not central to his evolutionary thought or to Anthroposophy.
- 9 When Steiner did use the term "race" he did not typically refer to the biological meaning of the term. He used it either in the sense of an ancient extinct species; a civilisation or nation; or a moral community based on ethical individualism. None of these usages in the works of Steiner go to support the assertion of "racism".
- 10 Detractors of Anthroposophy who repeat allegations about the supposed "racism within Anthroposophy" have typically taken a quote out of context and omitted key explanatory details. Alternatively they have failed to appreciate the specialised use of terminology employed by Steiner; or not understood the underlying premises of his remarks. A common mistake is the interpretation of Steiner's historical writings according to contemporary categories of meaning rather than in their own historical terms (a problem termed "presentism").²

"The international debate about racism in Anthroposophy" (6.1)

The author states that the issues of alleged racism at Te Ra "need to be placed in the wider context of the international debate". Ms Barwick states that accusations of racism "are based on the assertion that Steiner believed that different races were at different levels of the spiritual hierarchy, with 'Aryans' being the highest incarnation".

¹ Steiner 1920: *The Peoples of the Earth in the Light of Anthroposophy*, www.rsarchive.org

² For elaboration of the above points refer to the extensive academic study by Robert Rose, Ph.D. *Transforming Criticisms of Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education - Evolution, Race and the Quest for Global Ethics*, Centre for Philosophy and Anthroposophy, 2013, (203pp.)

- 12 The discussion in this section of the report of the so-called international debate about racism in Anthroposophy is inaccurate, unbalanced and unfair, for the following reasons.
- 13 First, the "international debate" is primarily a feature of the internet; with only a small number of scholarly texts written on the subject. The Barwick report does not set out the main features of this so-called debate; identify the key texts or participants with their credentials and background; or cite those consulted to formulate the discussion in the report of the "debate" and its significance.
- 14 Second, in support of the assertion of racism within Anthroposophy the author provides a substantial quotation from Staudenmaier, a hostile critic of Anthroposophy, purporting to explicate Steiner's views on race and racial evolution. The report does not provide a corresponding quote from a recognised Anthroposophical scholar providing an alternative point of view.
- 15 A prominent formal investigation and an academic study, which could have been cited in the report to provide balance to the discussion, are the report of the Dutch Commission and the more recent work of Robert Rose.³
- 16 In the 1990s, a Commission undertook a detailed survey of all of Steiner's works (over 6000 lectures in total, with approximately 360 volumes in Steiner's Collected Works). The Commission took four years to complete this work and its final report was 720 pages long. The Commission examined all passages in Rudolf Steiner's writings about the subject of race in their original contexts; and found no grounds for accusations of racist doctrine.
- 17 The Commission's final report stated:⁴
- There is no question of racial doctrine being involved in the work of Rudolf Steiner. Nor does his work contain any statements which have been made with the intention of insulting people or groups on account of race... Suggestions that racism is inherent in anthroposophy have been shown to be categorically incorrect. Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical portrayal of man is based on the equality of all individuals and not on an alleged superiority of one race over another one. Nevertheless, the collected work of Rudolf Steiner does contain some statements which according to current criteria are of a discriminatory [nature] or could be found to be discriminatory.
- 18 The Commission noted that with the evolution of language, many words develop different connotations and meanings over time, so that the originally intended meaning of a statement made by Rudolf Steiner in the early 1900's may well have undergone change, and if merely repeated, may lead to misunderstanding which places Rudolf Steiner in a negative modern light.
- 19 In regard to Steiner Waldorf education, the Commission found that (consistent with the prior judgement of the Dutch Government's Education Inspectors); racism is not inherent there either.
- 20 More recently, Dr Robert Rose of the Centre for Philosophy and Anthroposophy undertook a detailed academic analysis of the criticisms of Anthroposophy, particularly those of Peter Staudenmaier (which he disproves).⁵ Dr Rose concluded:

³ Above n 2.

⁴ Press release/executive summary in English available at <http://uncletaz.com/steinerrace.html>

⁵ Above n 2.

- (a) Seen in their proper contexts, Steiner's views, including his central evolutionary theory, held no racist theory or view.
- (b) Steiner's 'Positive Global Ethics' opposes Racism. (p.49)
- (c) Steiner only speaks of biological races on a few occasions; they are neither central to his evolutionary thought, nor to Anthroposophy. (p.78)
- (d) For Steiner, brotherly love and other moral values were the unifying principles that could unite all races. For him, what was important was that all peoples of the world, through the agency of individuals, could create a positive future. (pp.142-143)

"Anthroposophy within Waldorf Pedagogy" (4.1)

- 21 Anthroposophy, which can be translated through its etymological roots as "wisdom of the human being," is the philosophy which inspires Waldorf Education. It is also known as Spiritual Science and described by Rudolf Steiner as a *pathway of knowledge leading the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe*. It is not to be understood as a body of fixed doctrine requiring belief, but rather as a way of knowing or a mode of inquiry initiated by Rudolf Steiner and "every element in it is subject to being weighed and evaluated by each individual using his or her own freedom of judgement."⁶
- 22 Steiner's research gave birth to many movements – in agriculture, medicine, architecture, the arts, in social finance, as well as in education, where people have sought to deepen and extend their relationship to the world and to each other by applying spiritual concepts to their practical daily life. The first school was founded by Steiner on the invitation of industrialist Emil Molt as an impulse for social and cultural renewal after the First World War for the children of workers in the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart; it was to be an educational antidote to the despair that was then gripping central Europe. This school was revolutionary for its time and rooted in egalitarianism; it was co-educational and open to children from all social, religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- 23 Waldorf pedagogy is informed by Anthroposophy in that it holds at its centre the question of what it means to be human and strives out of this understanding to honour the unique developmental pathway of each child. While Rudolf Steiner spoke and wrote at great length about child development, education, the role of the teacher and teaching methodology, he did not prescribe a Waldorf School pedagogy as such and regularly asked of his students that they not rely on his authority but test his ideas to form their own truth. What we now know as Waldorf pedagogy has grown and developed over the past 95 years and is generally characterised as an "art of education" – mobile, creative, and adaptable; with an enduring base of Steiner's description of child development and spiritual understanding of human nature.
- 24 This part of the Barwick report contains an inaccurate and distorted interpretation of the history curriculum that is taught at Steiner Waldorf schools - as if it promotes a racial theory of cultural evolution, historical change or child development. This is incorrect, and to the contrary, no judgement is made at Steiner schools as to the relative "enlightenment" of cultures during different periods of history. Steiner schools celebrate difference and

⁶ Professor Douglas Sloan, Professor of History and Education Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University (2004)

diversity; and seek to give children an empathetic understanding of how it might be to live and think in another time and culture.

- 25 Relevance is seen as an essential driver of the Waldorf curriculum. Its foundations were in Europe and consequently were Eurocentric. Today, it finds resonance in over sixty countries around the world – within countries with cultures, traditions, ethnicities, religions as diverse as Kenya, Egypt, India, Japan, Israel, Thailand, Russia and Brazil. Each will adapt and localise the curriculum to reflect and honour the historical and cultural journey of their people, within a world context. The implications of this for Aotearoa New Zealand are not a concern, but an exciting challenge; as Steiner Waldorf schools here strive to reflect in their curricula our bicultural and increasingly multi-cultural heritage.
- 26 Schools and individual teachers will show wide variation as to how they translate curriculum and pedagogy for the particular time, place and circumstances of the children they teach. It would be expected that Steiner Waldorf teachers undertake to study Steiner's ideas on education with an open and questioning mind, not to receive them as dogma, belief or as prescriptive methodology. Where long established habits or practice remain unexamined and unrefreshed then what should be living and pliant can become entrenched and experienced as dogma.
- 27 Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education have their own language, a jargon/terminology that can be embedded within the culture of a school and which has the potential to alienate the audience it wishes to embrace if it is not understood, or misunderstood. The Federation is aware of the need to do better in this arena of communicating both ideas and intentions; there is a need to find a common and contemporary language for the concepts used and the willingness for teachers to regularly examine both theory and practice for their currency and relevance. The Federation expects this to become part of each school's self-review process and be evident in national curriculum review
- 28 While teachers are expected to be committed to their own journey of personal and professional learning and have an active interest in, and enthusiasm for, Steiner Education they are not expected to be members of the Anthroposophical Society. Steiner Waldorf teachers have a range of spiritual orientations and religious affiliations. They will be familiar with Waldorf curriculum and pedagogy; but there is no expectation that they will necessarily have extensive knowledge of Steiner's works or be committed to them unthinkingly.
- 29 Steiner Waldorf Schools are independent entities that work independently of the Anthroposophical Society. The Anthroposophical Society offers its interest and support to the schools and other associated movements; in doing this it does not dictate, direct or decide on any school matters. Employees of schools may be members of that Society but that is an individual decision and has no connection to, or influence on, their employment.

"The influence of Anthroposophy at Te Ra" (4.1)

- 30 Te Ra School provided a response to this part of the report to Ms Barwick at the conclusion of the meeting on 29 May 2014; yet the school's responses are not reflected in the final report. This is unfair and in breach of the principles of natural justice.
- 31 The report states that the complainants are "convinced" that Anthroposophist thought and teaching underpins the pedagogy and so on at the school; but that this is not openly acknowledged or discussed. In fact, Te Ra (as with all Steiner Waldorf schools) is quite open that Waldorf education is based on aspects of Anthroposophy. Te Ra rejects the inference that it concealed what are fundamental principles and thoughts, at the heart of its special character and well recorded in its founding and other documentation. New families

are expected to have some connection with the special character; and this is explored at the enrolment interview. However they are not expected to be Anthroposophists; or to study anthroposophy.

- 32 The Federation/Te Ra also rejects the suggestion that Anthroposophy is deliberately not discussed with parents on the basis that it may be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Anthroposophy is an expansive philosophy ranging across education, medicine, architecture, art, movement arts, agriculture, horticulture, social enterprise and religion. It is not possible for a school to discuss every aspect with parents. Further, it is not the school's role to introduce parents to Anthroposophy (just as it is not the role of any church school to ensure parents have read their Bible or have extensive understanding of their doctrine.) Parents have access to libraries, websites, to special character talks, handbooks, regular newsletters and parent evenings. It is expected that they will take initiative in accessing all these possibilities for learning more about their choice of education for their child.
- 33 It is also important to note that Anthroposophy is not taught to students at Steiner Schools. It may be introduced for critical discussion alongside other paths of thought in the senior high school, when those students study philosophy.

How the School dealt with the issue (4.2)

- 34 Te Ra provided a response to many of the points made in this section of the report, which has not been reflected in the final report. In particular, Te Ra is concerned with the way quotes from former parents and staff members have been set out in this part of the report. These are individual perceptions; many of them highly critical of Te Ra and its staff. The quoting of these perceptions, without full details to support them and without a response from Te Ra to each complaint, is unfair, misleading and in breach of the principles of natural justice. The Principal expressed her concern to the author about these individual, unproved perceptions being included in the report before it was finalised; but this concern appears to have been ignored.
- 35 In the second paragraph, the report states: "The first surprise to them was that most of the Faculty denied that racism was present." This statement is presented as a statement of fact; when it is an expression of an individual's perception.
- 36 Te Ra rejects the assertion in the first quote that "there wasn't a willingness to engage with the issue." The school did engage with the issue, albeit perhaps not at the speed that the complainants would have liked. The school has acknowledged that it could have responded more quickly; but it was not unwilling to engage.
- 37 At the third paragraph on page 6, the author states that "All of those who contributed to this summary agree that no review of the curriculum or the pedagogy conducted by the school is going to be adequate because the school can and will only be able to look through the lens of Anthroposophy and will not be able to stand outside in order to critique it." The Federation and Te Ra make the following response to this statement.
- 38 First, neither the Federation nor Te Ra accepts that the lens of Anthroposophy is a negative one, as this statement suggests.
- 39 Second, the Federation/Te Ra reject the suggestion that individual teachers and curriculum leaders have no capacity for open-minded independent thought, an interest in current best-practice research, or a breadth of curriculum knowledge and understanding that extends beyond the Steiner philosophy. The lens through which curriculum is being reviewed is that of a contemporary rendering of Steiner education that is relevant and responsive to all, in

21st Century Aotearoa New Zealand. As State-integrated schools, Steiner Waldorf schools teach the New Zealand curriculum alongside the Waldorf Curriculum.

40 Third, a curriculum review is underway at Federation level which includes provision for oversight by an external expert provided by the Ministry of Education. This work will be undertaken by representatives from all integrated Steiner Waldorf Schools and include the teachers of Te Reo and Te Ao Maori. These teachers have been busy in their own schools creating curricula which can be woven into a document that can serve as a model available for all schools. Te Ra School is not isolated from this picture but an active participant in this on-going curriculum work.

41 Behind this curriculum development work stands the Federation equity statement:

Steiner/Waldorf schools are responsive to the wider cultural, social and political contexts in which they are located in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 21st century. Our schools embrace and honour Aotearoa New Zealand's bi-cultural heritage and consider all human beings to be free and equal in dignity and rights.

The Steiner Federation acknowledges Rudolf Steiner's work. The Steiner school movement in Aotearoa New Zealand works out of an approach of equity and rejects strongly any historical statements from which inferences of racial prejudice may be made. Steiner/Waldorf schools and teacher training centres are culturally safe havens for all.

The Federation of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Schools in New Zealand's Curriculum Guidelines state that, *"the principles that are fundamental to Steiner/Waldorf education are that it is accessible to, and able to be adapted to, the needs of different ethnicities, cultures and religions. Curriculum content allows for the exploration of a wide variety of cultural traditions and world views. Steiner/Waldorf schools in Aotearoa New Zealand strive to imbue their curricula with the unique spirit and history of this land and its peoples."*

42 In relation to the complaints from Mana Maori concerning the creation of the "Declaration Against Discrimination", the report records Te Ra's acknowledgement that it did not handle this well. However Te Ra rejects the assertion by Mana that the school did not wish to make the document public. This is untrue. It was the school's intention from the inception of the statement (in a series of Faculty meetings in October 2012) to make it public, as the school's standpoint on the question of race in Steiner's writing.

"Response from School" (5.1)

43 The purported quote from the Principal at paragraph 3 is not in fact an exact quote of what the Principal said. The report is misleading in presenting it as a quote rather than reported speech.

44 Further, the fourth paragraph is incorrect and should read:

The Board again acknowledged that the School's initial response to the racism concerns raised by complainants was slow, and when it came the response was initially unsatisfactory.

"Additional Comments" (5.5)

45 Again, the quotes set out in this part of the report create a misleading and inaccurate picture. For example, the quote from the Board member about the movement towards the Treaty of Waitangi is taken out of context and misleading. In fact, the school has always been committed to the Treaty of Waitangi. The third quote is also taken out of context and incorrectly portrays how the school feels about the events that have taken place. Overall, the technique of lifting quotes from people out of their context and setting them out in the report like this is misleading and unfair.

Summary and Conclusions (7)

- 46 The opening paragraph of this section of the report is grossly unfair and misleading. The author inter-relates the "worldwide debate" on racism in Steiner's writing; with Te Ra's special character based on Steiner's writing; to the fact that Te Ra's special character is protected by legislation and the school's integration agreement. The first part of this progression is highly controversial, has been disproved by international studies (not reflected in the report) and is rejected by the Federation and Te Ra. It is unfair to present these unsubstantiated assertions in this way; side by side with recognition of Te Ra's special character.
- 47 Further, the Federation/Te Ra objects to the third paragraph:
- What is less clear is **whether and how** practice at Te Ra School is influenced by the racism that has been found within Steiner's writing and is therefore embedded in the Anthroposophical worldview. The complainants who initially raised the concerns and have pursued this complaint have not been able to provide **many specific instances** of ways in which racism has been manifest in teaching or behaviour management. However, these complainants have repeated that their **prime concern** is that those responsible for teaching and nurturing children at Te Ra and in other Steiner institutions in New Zealand are, by their training and background, imbued with a worldview underpinned with a hierarchy of races that sees indigenous races as having lesser value. **While this may be so for some or all of those teaching at Te Ra** there is currently no requirement or mechanism to audit the beliefs held by teachers in New Zealand's schools. (emphasis added)
- 48 There have been no substantiated instances of racism at Te Ra; so the author has no evidence on which to base her statement "whether and how practice at Te Ra School is influenced by racism that has been found within Steiner's writing and is therefore embedded in the Anthroposophical worldview". Further, the report has not established that there is in fact racist ideology in Steiner's writings. Elsewhere in the report the author acknowledges that it is beyond the scope of the report to take a position on this point and that reaching a conclusion on it would be difficult (6.1). Yet in the Conclusion the author appears to accept that this assertion has been proved. There is inadequate evidence in the report to support this conclusion; and it is submitted that the author has not undertaken adequate inquiries or research to enable her to do so.
- 49 Further, the author has no basis for saying "many specific instances" when the complainants have not provided **any** instances of racism at Te Ra.
- 50 By stating "While this may be so for some or all of those teaching at Te Ra" the author indicates her acceptance of the complainants "prime concern" that Te Ra and Steiner teachers are "imbued with a worldview underpinned with a hierarchy of races that sees indigenous races as having lesser value." This is a serious assertion, which challenges the professionalism and integrity of Steiner teachers, and is rejected categorically by Te Ra and the Federation. There is no evidence in the report for the author to have reached this conclusion; and it is unfair.
- 51 At paragraph four of this part of the report, the author states "That said, when the concerns were first raised by these complainants, more than two years ago, Te Ra's response was poor. The problem was denied and those **raising it were vilified** to the point where their continued involvement with the School became untenable for them and for many others."
- 52 This wording suggests that this is established fact, but it is unclear on what basis the author has concluded this. Te Ra has not been given details of anyone being "vilified" to enable it to investigate the matter – it takes such issues seriously and will act on

complaints. If it isn't, the author needs to make it clear that this is the complainant's perspective or opinion: "The problem was denied and those raising it felt vilified..."

53 At paragraph five the author states that "Te Ra has taken the concerns much more seriously in the last nine months..." In fact, Te Ra documented initial responses, and these documents show that the concerns *were* taken *seriously*, albeit not as quickly as was ideal. The "serious work" by Te Ra goes back further than nine months. The school finalised the "Declaration Against Discrimination" in December 2012 (from a start in October). Throughout 2013 there were three facilitated "Community Conversations". Work on the Special Character Guidelines began in November 2013.

54 In the final paragraph, the author states:

In conclusion, the concerns raised by Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler have substance and they are part of a worldwide issue. The writings of Rudolf Steiner are at the heart of the special character of Te Ra School, protected through the integration agreement, and some aspects of those writings are not compatible with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand's education system. Te Ra School has acknowledged the issue and is working to ensure that no racist ideology is reflected in the curriculum or in teaching and that the School embraces and promotes the bicultural nature of New Zealand.

55 This concluding paragraph is inaccurate, misleading and unfair because it suggests that all the claims of the complainants have been proven to be correct, including those about racist ideology within Anthroposophy and therefore at Te Ra. In fact, the presence of a racist ideology in Steiner's writings was not established, neither by the complainants nor Ms. Barwick. This statement by the author suggests an acceptance by her and more importantly by Te Ra that there is racist doctrine present in Anthroposophy which is incompatible with the Treaty of Waitangi and the New Zealand education system; and which Te Ra needs to work to exclude from the curriculum and its teaching. This is incorrect. The investigation did not find any evidence of racist ideology or practices, inconsistent with the Treaty of Waitangi or the New Zealand curriculum; and the author has not undertaken adequate inquiries and research to enable her to reach this conclusion.

56 The summary and conclusions are, to a large extent, based on unsubstantiated interpretations by the complainants (including the complainant's inaccurate and distorted construct of a "racial hierarchy"). This is particularly concerning where the integrity of individuals is potentially compromised by speculative statements, which haven't been fully researched and certainly have not been proved. In that case they have no place in the concluding paragraphs of the report.

Appendices

57 The Appendices to the report, which comprise the statements of Sophie Perkins and Krissy Dussler; and Mana Maori, contain a range of assertions and theories about racist ideology in Anthroposophy, Waldorf pedagogy and at Te Ra. These are unfounded and are rejected by the Federation and Te Ra. To the extent that these assertions are reflected in the report itself, they have already been answered in this paper.

58 It is noted that a considerable proportion of the Mana Maori statement is incorporated into the report, suggesting heavy reliance by the author on the assertions of this group. It is unfortunate that Te Ra was not given the opportunity to see these allegations by Mana Maori and respond; before the report was written.

59 In addition, Te Ra would like to correct the following factual error in the statement of Mana Maori. Mana Maori states that the group was formed to address a lack of Te Reo Maori

and tikanga at Te Ra School. In fact, Mana Māori was formed by the Te Ra Board in 2000 to support Te reo and tikanga at the school. Te Reo had been taught at Te Ra since 1996, with the exception of periods in 1999 and 2007/2008, when a Maori teacher was not available. When the teacher in question first visited the school through the "Kapiti Kids Motivation Trust" in November 2008, there wasn't a Maori teacher at the school. After this visit, the teacher was asked by the Principal to work with two classes for an intensive block. When this proved a positive experience and longer term employment was considered, members of Mana Māori were part of the interviewing group.

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT