

## **Review of Tomorrow's Schools: Video message**

Kia ora I'm Bali Haque, Chair of the Independent Taskforce charged with reviewing Tomorrow's Schools.

Tomorrow's Schools is the name given to the reforms that nearly 30 years ago dramatically changed the governance, management and administration of our schools.

In the past five months the taskforce has met with 200 groups across the entire country.

We've heard from students, parents and whānau, principals, teachers and support staff, trustees, education experts, youth and disability advocacy groups and a whole lot of very smart and passionate people. I must say it has been an absolute privilege.

We have had a great response online as well. 2,275 people completed our online surveys. We have received 85 formal submissions and 1,389 comments on our social media posts.

We have met with politicians from all sides.

We have also met with our cross-sector advisory panel four times, and they have not been short of advice for us!

We are now in the process of developing our recommendations to the Minister, which we hope to have to him by mid November.

You may be interested in what we are thinking right now as a result of all this meeting and talking.

I have to tell you-Its not clear cut -people don't always easily agree, and of course this is a good thing. We need good high quality robust debate, because through this, we will develop good solutions

There have been common themes though and they mostly relate to board and Ministry of Education capability, community representation, student voice, cultural responsiveness, funding and resourcing, collaboration, enrolment and zoning, choice and competition.

## **So, what have we been hearing needs to change?**

The building block of Tomorrow's Schools is boards of trustees. Having 2,500 independent crown entities run by more than 19,000 board of trustees members, many of whom change every three years, works well for some schools. Especially higher decile larger schools, but not so well for lower decile smaller rural schools where there are often issues with getting the right people onto the boards. Sometimes the consequences of this are dire.

We think this is a significant and major problem for New Zealand as a whole and we are actively considering what needs to be done.

We are working through key questions like:

Can we strengthen and support boards more? For example, could independent Governance experts with specific skills be appointed to boards?

Should iwi be represented on boards and if so how?

Are boards being asked to do too much?

Is appointing and performance managing a principal something that boards are all supported in doing?

Do principals as educational leaders have the space support and time to focus on the right things?

Are there alternative to a board of trustees' model?

For example, some people tell us that the current model creates a lot of duplication, and they support clustering of schools to support greater consistency and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Many feel there needed to be much stronger regional leadership (and not directed from Wellington national office), closer to schools by educators. So we've discussed the idea of multi-disciplinary teams in local hubs to give schools access to the support students' need, in their own community, without having to navigate a complex system on their own. This would also mean important decisions could be made in a local context.

The message that is coming through really strongly, from almost every group we have met with, is the need for less competition between schools, and more collaboration.

There's a lot more to think about...

We heard from students, whānau and iwi that professional development should be prioritised to help teachers to be more culturally responsive. The system is clearly not delivering for many Maori. We hear similar stories from Pacific communities.

We have met Kura staff, whanau and students who are keen to develop their own educational pathways entirely.

We've also heard about the need for broader community engagement, for students to be given a much stronger voice.

We have also heard from parents that they need somewhere to go to when an issue can't be resolved by the school. That adds up to a call for an independent complaints process.

We have heard from multiple groups that the system for learner support and helping children with disabilities is simply not working, and causing major frustrations and disadvantage. We heard a lot about the need for more resources and specialists to quickly assess and support student wellbeing and learning.

We heard that students need a smoother transition, and better support, as they move through the system from early learning, then primary school, intermediate and then onto secondary school. Support for Communities of Learning (kahui Ako) was mixed.

We heard about school leadership and how most teachers and principals feel much more needs to be done to identify, nurture and support potential and current school leaders. It is a big issue and we are thinking about what a national school leadership council or centre might look like and what it might do.

Principals are telling us that we have a major problem with teacher supply. Some principals are telling us this represents a huge threat to our education system, and we agree... Without quality teachers it's hard to make any progress.

Even the teachers in the system right now are concerned about the professional development and support available to them. We are thinking hard about how we might ensure that all teachers have access to quality professional development and advice.

Some serious questions are being asked in the sector about whether the Ministry of Education is responsive and focussed enough, and whether the agencies could do better working together to ensure they really meet the needs of schools.

It is clear that the Taskforce has a lot to think about. Our report is due to the Minister of Education in November.

The one thing I can tell you for sure is that a key theme of our report will be equity and excellence. We need to ensure that every child, wherever and whoever they are, gets a fair deal and receives the best quality education possible.

If you met with us, made a submission, completed the online survey or commented on social media, thank you.

Our Taskforce is independent of any government or party. We are determined to be courageous about change. We want the changes we recommend to set the direction for the future of education for the next 30 years, regardless of politics. Our children and young people deserve the best education we can give them.