



Office of Hon Hekia Parata

Minister of Education

25 AUG 2015

Tēnā koutou

Tēnā anō koutou i raro i te maru o ngā maunga marohirohi, ngā awa miharotia me ngā tupuna kahurangi o ngā motu e rua.

I am writing to all kōhanga reo whānau in response to form letters I have been receiving from some kōhanga about the Waitangi Tribunal claim (WAI 2336). The form letters demand that I resume discussions with the current Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust Board on WAI 2336, and that I do not seek a Government representative on the Board.

It is important that you hear directly from me on these and other matters.

Our government is committed to te reo Māori and to every Māori child getting the best education possible. We now have more Māori than ever participating in early learning, including kōhanga, attaining NCEA level 2, and going on to better options. But there is still much more to do and the role of kōhanga whānau in that is essential.

Total funding to kōhanga reo has increased significantly since we have been in Government from about \$60 million in 2008/09 increasing to about \$90 million in 2014/15. This is a 50% increase over six years when the number of kōhanga reo has remained at around 463, and enrolments in kōhanga have remained at around 9,100.

In 2012 following the Waitangi Tribunal report on WAI 2336 I began working with the current Trust Board. However, in 2013 that work had to stop because of a series of reviews into the Trust and its subsidiary Te Pātaka Ōhanga. A number of reviews had to be carried out and reports were done on all of these. The reports found problems and a number of recommendations were made which the Trust has been working on. Those reports have been made available to the media and you should be able to see them too. I refer you to the Trust to access this information.

The Trust Board has agreed that a review of its governance structure is necessary and that review seems to have started. However, I have for two years been waiting to hear from the current Board how it proposes to replace the current arrangements with a modern form of governance that is representative, transparent, accountable and auditable and what process will be used to ensure that kōhanga whānau are fully aware of all the information and what choices they have. The most recent update I have received from the Board does not address these concerns.

When the Trust first began in April 1982 it had a Board made up of two patrons, four senior government officials, and representatives of the Māori Women's Welfare League, New Zealand Māori Council and three others to represent kōhanga reo, all for three year terms. The Trust's current deed was established in 1992 and in it the Board makes its own appointments for life.

The current Board structure is not in line with good governance practices, which would include direct representation by kōhanga reo whānau and an open and transparent election process. Reporting by a modern governance entity, receiving significant public monies, would be open, transparent, auditable, and responsive to both kōhanga concerns and those of the government that provides the licensing and funding. Recent changes have been made to the Trust's Deed to have limited terms of appointment for Trustees, which is a positive step.

In April last year I suggested that a Crown representative on the Board was an option. That suggestion was made in the context of other Māori organisations that receive significant Crown funding, for example Whare Wānanga, Māori Television, and Poutama Trust. It is not something I have since insisted on but I remain open to that possibility.

In the meantime I will say to you what I have said to the current Board – and I continue to make publicly available all the correspondence between the Board and myself – that until there is a new, modern governance entity in place, elected through an open, informed, and transparent process I am unable to resume discussions about WAI 2336.

My role as Minister of Education is twofold:

- to ensure that kōhanga get the support they need to be successful; and,
- to assure the Government and the public that this is happening.

When an open process has put a new structure in place it will be up to any new board to decide who represents you in discussions on WAI 2336. If a new board chooses current trustees to represent you, then I will be happy to work with them.

I look forward to continuing to support you all in the important work that you do.

Ko te tūmanako ka oti pai ēnei whiriwhiringa kia haere tonu te mahi a ngā kohanga mo a tātou tamariki mokopuna i runga i te pai me te ātaahua.

Heoi anō rā



Hekia Parata

Minister of Education

cc: Hon Te Ururoa Flavell, Minister for Māori Development