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GROUP

**To: Education Act Update
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Wellington 6140
New Zealand**

c/o Secretariat: education.update@education.govt.nz

Submission: Review of the Education Act 1989

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) thanks the Ministry for the opportunity to submit on this Review.

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is an independent charity working to eliminate child poverty in New Zealand through research, education and advocacy. CPAG believes that New Zealand's high rate of child poverty is not the result of economic necessity, but is due to policy neglect and a flawed ideological emphasis on economic incentives. Through research, CPAG highlights the position of tens of thousands of New Zealand children, and promotes public policies that address the underlying causes of the poverty they live in.

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General comments:

The OECD (2015) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report¹ states: "*the impact of socio-economic background on PISA scores is greater and has increased by more in New Zealand than the OECD average*". The experiment that was heralded as "Tomorrow's Schools" has failed many children, especially those living in low income communities. Among these, children with disabilities have been most severely disadvantaged. This review is long overdue, and CPAG welcomes the opportunity to submit.

Submission:

1. What should the goals for education be?

As reflected in Te Whariki, the early childhood curriculum "*to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society*" (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Or to quote Cathy Wylie (Vital Connections NZCER Press 2012) "*Our schools need to give our children and young people attractive learning opportunities that build in them the knowledge, skills and understandings and values that will enable them to lead meaningful and contributing lives, that build our society and economy as well as themselves.*"

¹ OECD ECONOMIC SURVEYS: NEW ZEALAND © OECD 2015, p. 52. See <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/1015141ec004.pdf?expires=1449905116&id=id&accname=ocid177592&checksum=705176B637DF3E98FB45423AD2A33759>.

2. What process should be used for setting a national priorities statement for all learning and schooling?

A process by which the national and local infrastructure of connections can contribute systematically to planning, developing, sharing and implementing shared goals successfully and which reflect policy coherence and collaboration between policy and operations. Underpinning everything are givens: state education must be free, secular and compulsory to age 16. However, without acknowledgement of the inequalities of out of school dimensions which impact most on students living in low income communities, these priorities will not be fulfilled.

New Zealand's education legislation must incorporate the principles of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly in relation to the following article of UNCROC:

- Article 1 - rights apply to all
- Articles 4, 5 and 6 – making rights a reality
- Articles 7 and 8 – the right to an identity
- Article 12 - the right to have your views heard
- Articles 13 and 14 – the right to free expression
- Article 15 – the right to choose your friends
- Article 16 – the right to privacy
- Article 17 – the right to information
- Article 23 – the same rights for disabled children
- Article 28 – the right to good quality education

3. What should the roles and responsibilities of a school or a kura board be?

4. What changes could be made to simplify planning and reporting?

The 1989 Education Act put private sector management structures into schools, the Board of Trustees (BoT) model (Tomorrow's Schools), to reinforce the new paradigm of competition. Schools were to reform as competing education providers in an education marketplace.

When the Tomorrow's Schools model was introduced under Prime Minister David Lange in 1989 he said schools would improve because parents will insist on a good education for their children. However, those schools best able to compete, schools in high decile communities, have been the big winners while schools in low income communities, whose children have the greatest barriers to education, continue to struggle. Their parents and their communities do not have, and do not have access to, the skills and resources required by this model.

The most poorly managed decile 10 school will always out-compete the best managed low decile school.

This Tomorrow's Schools model has failed children, their parents, and their communities. Children with disabilities have been severely disadvantaged under this system. The 2013 *Disability Survey*² shows that of the 95,000 disabled children aged 0-14 years, 15% lived in households with incomes under \$30,000. Their parents find it difficult to negotiate the funding pathways, and the school administration is too overwhelmed to provide much assistance.³

After 25 years we can see no significant contribution either BoTs, or their national body, have brought to improving student achievement.

Unnecessary red tape derives directly from having 2,500 individual school boards, each one required to reinvent the wheel on simple matters.

² Statistics New Zealand (2013) The New Zealand Disability Survey, Statistics New Zealand, at www.stats.govt.nz/disability.

³ Wynn, D. (2015) 'It shouldn't be this hard': children, poverty and disability, Child Poverty Action Group, at <http://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/150317ChildDisability.pdf>.

There has never been a cost-benefit analysis of the management structure of BoTs.

Wylie identifies fundamental flaws in the current system:

- equating self-management with schools standing alone
- fragmentation of government agencies
- hidden costs

A new governance model is desperately needed which provides a co-ordinated infrastructure at Tomorrow's Schools local and national levels. The poor coherence of the curriculum and qualifications work must be addressed.

***5. To better provide for groups of schools and kura to work together more to plan, deliver and report: enable collaboration, flexibility and innovation.
How can resources be better focused to get the best whole-of-community education outcomes?***

Schools in low income communities are penalised heavily by the Tomorrow's Schools model which assumes parental skills will contribute in meaningful ways to help schools lift student achievement. However the best of parental intentions will of itself be unable to help raise education standards.

At schools in high income communities, where BoTs have a plentiful supply of lawyers and accountants for example, these skills assist in administration which helps a school reduce the burden of red tape created by the Tomorrow's Schools model but again this does not feed into improving student achievement.

Schools in high income communities also benefit from a high proportion of parents with tertiary education, able to assist in preparing their own children and their classmates for educational success.

A new governance model, based on parental engagement and participation rather than parental management via BoTs, is needed.

But there is no research evidence anywhere in the world to show that parental governance can overcome social inequalities.

Adequate funding for low decile schools is a critical and urgent necessity.

6. Making every school and kura a great one - How a graduated range of responses could be developed to better support schools when difficulties arise.

Schools need better regional resources with earlier and closer intervention from education officials.

A Treasury⁴ report shows how good outcomes for students depend on community resources. If the Minister is serious about overcoming the effects of social and economic gaps, she needs to take contextual issues seriously.

Regional services, including support for truancy and property services, were stripped away under Tomorrow's Schools. These have had to be partially rebuilt because schools simply couldn't cope with

⁴ Maani, S. (2002) Education and Maori Relative Income Levels over Time: The Mediating Effect of Occupation, Industry, Hours of Work and Locality. New Zealand Treasury Working Paper 02/17 See: <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/research-policy/wp/2002/02-17> ,

them. However what has not been rebuilt are the services needed to help schools early on, and in practical ways, when they begin to struggle.

Regional MOE officials need to support schools facing difficulties.

Local, supportive, practical and automatic responses are required from the Ministry and its officials..

7. Making best use of local education provision - How local arrangements can support choice and diversity.

The impact of so-called “choice and diversity” has been to increase the resources, facilities and educational opportunities for schools in high income areas with the opposite for schools in low income areas. Current decile funding fails to match the needs of students in low income areas. Even a cursory look at the total finances available to high and low decile state schools show that higher decile schools have much more to spend. In other words the increased decile funding for schools in low income communities in no way matches the extra income for high decile schools through foreign fee-paying students, so-called “voluntary” donations and economies of scale the much larger high decile schools are able to utilise.

CPAG supports QPEC in calling for a full review of Tomorrow’s Schools with no exclusions as in the present review.

International data continues to show a decline in New Zealand’s comparative performance in the core areas of literacy and numeracy:

Average PISA scores in New Zealand are above the OECD mean but have been declining. However, scores for Māori and Pasifika students are well below average and have also been falling. Moreover, the impact of socio-economic background on PISA scores is greater and has increased by more in New Zealand than the OECD average. While attainment has been rising for all groups, rates remain considerably lower for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or of Māori or Pasifika ethnicity. Increasing educational attainment is very important for equality of opportunity in the long term, because parental attainment, especially of mothers, has a strong influence on how well their children do in education.⁵

None of the matters raised in this current review can fix this problem.

CPAG welcomes the chance to contribute to a full review of the educational structures introduced under Tomorrow’s Schools.

⁵ OECD ECONOMIC SURVEYS: NEW ZEALAND © OECD 2015, p. 52. See <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/1015141ec004.pdf?expires=1449905116&id=id&acname=ocid177592&checksum=705176B637DF3E98FB45423AD2A33759>.