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Ministry of Education
Wellington

VocationalEducation.Reforms@education.govt.nz

Submission to the proposed redesign of the vocational education and training system

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the redesign proposals of the vocational education and training system.

Access to vocational training plays an important role in supporting employment opportunities and business growth. This is particularly important across some of the large industry sectors based on the Kāpiti Coast including construction, health, technology and professional services.

While Council is not a vocational education provider, we have a role in planning, and advocating, for the services that our community needs, to ensure the right services are in place to support economic growth and to ensure we 'grow we' over the next 30-50 years.

Our District's ability to access basic and fundamental services is an ongoing challenge and our community has raised concerns that there are not easily accessible pathways and opportunities for our youth and older residents alike to partake of vocational education. Our businesses have also raised concerns because they are struggling to access local talent and skills needed to meet their business needs.

In resolving these access issues, our primary support for the redesign of the vocational education and training system focuses on improving equitable access to people in locations like the Kāpiti Coast, whether in the classroom (physical or virtual) or on the job. More equitable access for the residents and businesses includes:

- Physical accessibility to training opportunities (geographical proximity, ease of attendance),
- Costs (course costs, costs of living support, and for getting to training), and
- Relevance of vocational training opportunities to our people (young and older) and our businesses seeking staff, in formats that bring the two together to enhance productivity.

We expand on these points further under your proposed areas of change below.

Proposal 1: Creating a healthy ITP network that responds to regional needs

Council **supports** the:

1. Government objective for a vocational training system that restores the connections between regional institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) and their communities, local industries, and with regional development objectives.
2. Vocational education catering to large and small industries and employers, across a wide range of sectors, with different types of providers offering traditional and innovative delivery options.

We also note:

- There is a need for the ITPs to work closely with regions and Districts to determine delivery arrangements that meet the equitable accessibility factors described above.
- Kapiti sits on the northern outskirts of Wellington. Our closest providers to the south are in Porirua, 35kms away from our main population hub of Paraparaumu, Raumati and Waikanae, and a further 23kms from our northern settlement of Ōtaki. While we are lucky to have Te Wānanga o Raukawa offer a range of tertiary and Te Reo Māori opportunities in Otaki, the closest vocational option northwards is a satellite campus in Levin provided by UCOL. For those in the northern parts of our District, travelling to these educational opportunities is particularly challenging, with few available public transport options.
- The current limited access to vocational training opportunities is a significant barrier to supporting better economic and wellbeing outcomes for our District. Many of our younger residents have no clear pathway from school to further training, with limited means and ability to access education, training, and employment opportunities, often having to leave our District to do so. As a result of the current difficult economic environment, we have recently seen a 47% increase in those aged 15 -24 years, who are not employed or engaged in education or training (NEET).
- Additionally, with 34% present of Kāpiti's population over the age of 60 years, increasing costs of living means an increasing number of our older residents are needing to retrain and re-enter the workforce. They can provide a key resource and workforce support for our businesses. However, travel to training is a barrier with many not able to commute longer distances to training opportunities.
- We believe that making access easier, will in the medium-term, provide local residents with increased pathways to high paying more productive employment, provide options for our young and older population to participate in education and training where there are currently gaps (ie for Kāpiti's rangatahi, pathways for those straight out of school) and support the growth of the local business community.
- Innovative ways to deliver vocational training opportunities provide an opportunity to benefit residents, our businesses and provide the ITPs, PTEs and wānanga further income opportunities.
- UCOL has recently expressed an interest and potential in extending their vocational services to our District. We welcome and support the potential for changes proposed to the vocational system to encourage and support current and new providers to help meet our growing local needs.

Proposal 2: Establishing an industry-led system for standards-setting and industry training

1. Council **supports** the proposal to establish an industry-led system which is based on standards-setting and industry training. We believe this would create the opportunity for a more efficient system focused on the functions and skills that industry finds most valuable.
2. Council has **no preference** between Options A and B in the Discussion document. The option that best supports the type of initiative just described and that provides for in-work based training opportunities for our community, and our businesses, is the option we would support.

We also note:

- Council recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mills Albert (a civil works contractor) to establish an infrastructure / civil works training hub in Kapiti. There is potential for this to support the infrastructure sector on the west coast of the lower North Island to ensure a future supply of suitably trained and qualified staff. This work needs coordinated Government support to ensure sustainability and to maximise potential.
- In this structural area of redesign, we do have concerns that funding for work-based training is to be re-prioritised to fund standard setting under both options. We elaborate on this under the Funding section below.
- Allowing industry, a say in what vocational training is provided is essential. This is the cornerstone of the vocational training system having relevance both to employers looking for staff and learners seeking to gain the skills for the work they are interested in, within their own Districts.

Proposal 3: A funding system that supports stronger vocational education

1. Council **does not support** the options under Proposal 2 to reprioritise funding from work-based rates to fund standards setting. We believe that funding developing standards by reprioritising existing funding for organisations would have an unintended consequence of constraining delivery of courses.

We also note:

- An effective funding regime that incentivises the right outcomes is needed. To help ensure this, we strongly advocate for local input into the design and delivery of education and training opportunities within our District, to ensure value for money outcomes for our District are achieved.
- The importance of maintaining the viability of provider-based training is essential to ensuring equitable access to vocational training opportunities. For Kāpiti, that would need to include improved ease of access through proximity (providers physically in our District or delivering to our District through some other innovative means) and cost, as discussed earlier.
- In saying this, we do have concerns that 'adequate' funding for ITPs, PTEs and wānanga is to be at the expense of funding for disadvantaged groups (with low prior achievement,

disabled learners, and Māori and Pacific learners). This potentially limits the ability to provide equitable access and will have a direct negative impact for some of our communities.

- In short, Council's expectation is that the redesign of the vocational training system ensures sufficient funding is provided to the ITPs, PTEs and wānanga so they can effectively deliver the courses that are needed by our community to find jobs, and for our businesses, support the jobs they can offer. We do not see our vulnerable communities as a trade-off to the wider system. Rather, not getting the funding redesign and adequate delivery right is an unacceptable trade-off in our economy.

Other factors supporting local outcomes

1. Council requests that funding to support small businesses also be considered, as this would enhance educational and economic outcomes. We believe funding to help support small businesses take on prospective employees/learners for on-the-job employment/training would increase opportunities and productivity.

We also note:

- While the Ministry of Social Development provides support for beneficiaries, we understand this support is not available for wider employment/training opportunities.
 - Kāpiti District has a predominance of small businesses providing local and regional services. Attracting and growing skilled staff is often a significant barrier to their growth. Balancing the costs and affordability of training is often a key reason why many small businesses can't offer work-based vocational training. Re-introducing funding and support through this redesign process would provide an additional stimulus and security to help support businesses make this strategic investment, in turn supporting education and economic outcomes.
2. Council suggests that a wider scope for the review be considered so that it encompasses the "fit-for-purpose, accessible educational and vocational platform" that needs to be built to support youth and business to develop and grow within local communities.

We also note:

3. For Kāpiti District, a redesign of the vocational education system provides a key opportunity to provide a more flexible and targeted system of vocational training that can provide meaningful change in the lives of our people, young and older, and grow our skilled and educated workforce to support our businesses to grow.

We would be happy to discuss the points outlined in this paper with officials and the Minister.

Yours sincerely



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