

12 November 2025

Tēnā koe Minister Stanford,

The Board of Trustees at Kapakapanui School expresses our deep concern and disappointment at the Government's intention to remove the requirement for School Boards of Trustees to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the governance and strategic objectives of our schools. This change is being advanced in haste, without meaningful consultation with school communities or iwi and runs directly counter to the spirit of partnership that underpins our education system.

Our school is located in the rohe of Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, and we have a strong, active partnership with our mana whenua. This partnership is not merely symbolic—it is tangible. It shapes our local curriculum, supports our whānau engagement, and strengthens students' sense of identity and belonging.

To remove the Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibility clause would:

- undermine the meaningful relationship we have built with Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai and our Māori whānau at school;
- diminish our capacity to honour that ongoing commitment;
- risk signalling that Te Tiriti is optional in the school context.

We believe the rationale offered for the change—that Boards are 'volunteer parents' who should not carry constitutional obligations—fails to recognise the unique governance and direction-setting role School Boards play. The existing clause enabled Boards to work in partnership with iwi, hapū and whānau, contributing to greater educational equity for Māori learners.

At Kapakapanui School, we affirm that:

- Partnership matters: Our relationship is founded on mutual respect and recognition of mana. Governance informed by this relationship is more effective and authentic when it is founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Educational equity depends on it: When schools embed Te Tiriti obligations, tamariki Māori see themselves and their culture affirmed, and outcomes improve.
- Removing clarity creates ambiguity: If the statutory objective no longer explicitly references giving effect to Te Tiriti-based commitments risk becoming under-resourced, weakened and optional.

- Our local context demands it: Whānau, hapū and iwi in our community expect and deserve meaningful recognition of their role. To remove the statutory obligation is to diminish the value of our relationship with Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai.

Our position is in line with the statements of the Iwi Chairs Forum, the New Zealand Principals' Federation and the NZ School Boards Association in relation to the Education & Training Amendment Bill No.2:

- As Crown entities, School Boards have both legal and moral duty to understand and give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Strong communities are built through partnership - not by rolling back commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Removing Te Tiriti o Waitangi protections from legislation weakens the Crown's commitment to achieving equitable outcomes for ākonga Māori.
- Iwi and hapū see better outcomes for whānau when Te Tiriti o Waitangi is understood and lived.

Accordingly, we respectfully call on you as Minister to:

- ensure any legislative change that has removed the requirement for School Boards to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is revoked;
- affirm explicitly that all Schools Boards remain accountable for meeting the letter and spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi; and
- ensure that any future reform or review of School Boards' governance objectives strengthens rather than weakens the role of Te Tiriti partnership in the schooling system.

Our School Board remains fully dedicated to ensuring that Kapakapanui School is inclusive, culturally responsive, and committed to equitable outcomes for all ākonga. We look forward to your response and to engaging constructively with your office.

Ngā mihi nui

The Board of Trustees  
Kapakapanui School