TEU | TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION
TE HAUTŪ KAHURANGI

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12th June 2024

Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills
Parliament
Email: penny.simmonds@parliament.govt.nz
cc. Sue McCormack, Gus Gilmore

Tēnā koe Minister,

**Re: A letter of expectations from kaimahi in Te Pūkenga**

In response to your letter to Te Pūkenga on the 20th of May whereby you outlined your expectations as a Minister, we as representatives of staff across Te Pūkenga put forward some expectations of you and Te Pūkenga.

Your letter outlines expectations on performance, financial viability and sustainability, and 'right-sizing' Te Pūkenga. You state that urgent work is needed to preserve regional delivery, while you also state that some divisions need to make difficult choices in regard to operations and assets.

A crucial condition for achieving the expectations you have set out is by fostering a robust vocational education sector. We train for the future needs of tomorrow, and those we train contribute significantly to their communities, the local and national economies.

You have previously stated that ākonga should be at the centre of a vocational education system. As the staff that support, train, mark and guide them, we know that staff working conditions are students' learning conditions.

Kaimahi in the sector have called on you for clarity and transparency time and time again. We want to know where we are heading. We need a training environment that is stable, visible and able to cater for the needs of community and industry as set out in the Te Pūkenga Charter.

**Right-size**

As kaimahi in Te Pūkenga, we are best placed to know what the 'right-size' is.

A right-sized vocational education institution has a focus on the ākonga and the kaimahi that train them. It is well resourced and central to the needs of regional communities, industry and mana whenua. It will deliver the trained nurses, mechanics and social workers that our communities need. Our courses across Aotearoa train for many professions, from business programmes that sustain economic growth in communities to agricultural and conservation

programmes that care for our land. The diversity of training is a strength in the Vocational Education and Training system.

In short, training is right-sized when it is public, local and quality.

**Keep training public**

We cannot assess the value of education through balance sheets alone when, for example, the training we provide leads second-chance learners to higher paying jobs, and many high-school leavers into careers in industries crying out for skilled workers.

When assessing the viability of the sector, it is essential to consider not only the short-term financial health of individual institutes within that sector but also the broader and longer-term contribution of the sector to the national economy. Sustainability is also about responsibility to our long-term needs as a country. We need training provision that endures beyond the ebbs and flows of markets, and focused resourcing of front line kaimahi who build our future workforce. This can only be achieved by public institutions.

We note with concern in your letter that capital assets and how we operate within them may be subject to 'difficult choices'. Our campuses are public assets and community hubs that are important to the educational and training needs of people from all walks of life, used by ākonga and employers alike.

**Keep training local**

The kaimahi we represent are committed to localised delivery in our small, medium and large communities across Aotearoa. We expect Te Pūkenga, and the future system, to focus on the small campuses in places like Whakatane, Kerikeri and Timaru, where the need for vocational education and training is just as important as the large campuses in major cities.

Our members are often the 'connector' in communities who provide the link that ākonga need in order to take that next step into employment, due in no small part to years of industry experience within the very communities they train in.

The Te Pūkenga Charter continues to guide vocational education and training, it sets out a clear requirement for the delivery of programmes that meet the regional needs of Aotearoa.

**Keep training quality**

The staff we represent are skilled professionals who are also experienced and dedicated educators. Among them are nurses, builders, social workers, and so many more who transfer their considerable skills to the next generation. They are experts in the industries they train into.

Quality education cannot be maintained with lower numbers of staff, higher workloads or pressure to do more with less. And it cannot be achieved with the constant threat of more upheaval and job losses hanging over our members' heads.

Finally, we expect all our publicly owned and funded tertiary education institutions to be collaborative and properly resourced to deliver good pedagogy – which requires a good mix of face-to-face classroom time, on the job practical experience and online learning, as per the Te Pūkenga Charter.

**Requirement to meet**

Finally, we expect Te Pūkenga to be a good employer that values staff as stakeholders with vital expertise in both education and industry and that need to be consulted with in the development of the long-term future for vocational education and training.

This includes meeting with TEU members on an ongoing basis. We have written to you multiple times seeking meetings and engagement, but we have not yet received any responses. It is not acceptable to refuse to engage with a major stakeholder in the sector you have been given the privilege to govern.

We look forward to hearing from your office with an appropriate time to meet.

Ngā mihi,





Julie Douglas
Tumu Whakarae | National President
(Tiriti)

Huhana Watene
Tumu Whakarae | National President
(Māori)

As Branch Presidents representing members:

Tim Robinson, Ara

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Bryan Harris, Tai Poutini

Vicki Needham, Toi Ohomai

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