

5 July 2018

Honourable Chris Hipkins

Parliament Buildings

Wellington 6160, New Zealand

By email: chris.hipkins@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Minister Hipkins

re. Shortage of Educational Psychologists

We are delighted that after a number years of discussions that the Ministry of Education has recognised that this country has a shortage of educational psychologists. MBIE projections suggest that to meet public demand, a further 500 psychologists will be required within the next two years and a further 850 between 2020 and 2025.

We wondered if the Minister was aware of the recent overseas recruitment programme to meet this demand. In June 2018 there were advertisements in UK and Australian publications advertising for 10 educational psychologists at salaries $88,652 - $106,000 a good $25K above the starting salaries, currently proposed in negotiating the new collective agreement.

In the short term this may achieve the goal of recruiting more educational psychologists. Additional resources will need to be made available to ensure that these psychologists are given a good induction programme, high quality supervision and that they are upskilled in the assessment/intervention needs of Tangata Whenua.

Gavin Carter, Strategic Business Partner, Sector Enablement & Support explained that although this salary scale was an advertising error he did expect the new overseas psychologists to be recruited at the top of the scale. He stated that these would be experienced, senior psychologists to meet the specific needs of the Auckland region.

We understand that it is difficult for overseas psychologists who have older overseas qualifications to become registered in this country by the New Zealand Registration Board (NZPB). This would be problematic when recruiting more senior psychologists and prevent them from practicing in this country. Did the Ministry of Education discuss this with the NZPB?

This is an opportune time for the government to negotiate favourable salaries with NZEI/APEX as part of the next Collective Agreement. Psychologists work at a high professional standard and they also carry a high level of risk e.g. suicide, injury, courts. In the past the salary scale of educational psychologists was in keeping with the leaders of the education sector, including school principals. We understand that salary is not the only barrier to the retention of educational psychologists who have additional concerns about the intensity of workloads, management, paperwork and supervision. However, higher salaries would go some way to retaining existing psychologists, encouraging local recruitment and avoid paying high fees to overseas agencies. There is a greater chance that we would retain locally trained psychologists compared to those recruited overseas who have additional barriers to negotiate when they migrate to another country.

In the long term the NZPsS and IEDP are keen to be involved in workforce discussions to help maintain the quality and sustainability of our profession (see the Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Education 2017 attached). We were surprised that this overseas recruitment drive was not mentioned at the Ministry of Education Workforce meetings or the Psychology Workforce Group (PWG). We are interested in supporting you develop sustainable workforce strategies that do not demotivate psychologists employed on lower salaries. We would like psychologists to be available for all our most challenged young people and their communities.

Please do contact us if you require any further assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Quentin Abraham

**President of the New Zealand Psychological Society**



Michele Blick

**Chair of the Institute of Educational and Developmental Psychology**

cc.Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education

cc. John Crawshaw, Office of the Director of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Chair of the Psychology Workforce Group

cc. David Wales, National Director Special Education Service

cc. Anna Priestley, Sector Enablement and Support, Senior Advisor

cc. Omar Hamed, APEX, Advocate

cc. Bella Pardoe, NZEI Executive Officer