

## Consultation on the Education Act 1989

### Introduction

#### About this submission

This response to the Ministry of Education's consultation process is made on behalf of NetSafe, New Zealand. Note that NetSafe has only responded to the questions in the public discussion document<sup>1</sup> that are relevant to its work.

#### About NetSafe

NetSafe is an independent non-profit organisation providing cyber safety education and support to all New Zealanders. The Ministry of Education provides a grant on behalf of government to NetSafe.

NetSafe is New Zealand's agency for online harm. NetSafe has an unrelenting focus on online safety and security. It exists solely to achieve the goal of a safer, more secure, online environment that enables digital opportunity for all New Zealanders.

NetSafe has extensive practical experience and expertise in supporting New Zealand schools and their wider communities. Every day we work directly, and through our network of partners, to reduce levels of online challenge and minimise harm if things go wrong. This work informs other activities such as advocating for New Zealand's internet users interests to policy makers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Have your say about Updating the Education Act 1989. A public discussion document.* (2015) Ministry of Education. Accessed at:- [http://bit.ly/Updating\\_the\\_educationact\\_1989](http://bit.ly/Updating_the_educationact_1989)

## Submission

### **Making sure everyone knows the goals for education**

#### **Q1. What should the goals for education be?**

NetSafe's view is that the examples of goals in the discussion document (p.6) do not state the goals for education clearly. Understanding the intent of a statement such as "Young people will be confident connected, actively involved, lifelong learners" requires in depth knowledge of education and the education system.

NetSafe believes that the goals should:-

- Be written in plain language; and
- Explicitly include the role of 'digital' in
  - Learning and teaching and its relationship with desired economic and social outcomes for New Zealand; and in
  - Relation to young people's well being.

#### **Q2. What process should be used for setting a national priorities statement for early learning and schooling?**

As indicated in its response to Q1. NetSafe believes that priorities should be set against goal(s) for well being. The focus of such national priorities should be collectively agreed through an stakeholder engagement process that includes young people, family and whanau, civil and business sectors. However, in NetSafe's experience there are gaps in stakeholders' understanding of educational issues that need addressing if this process was to be effective.

#### **Q3. What should the roles and responsibilities of a school or a kura board be?**

##### **Roles**

NetSafe believes that:-

- A board's role should include: Adopt an active and ongoing risk management approach to develop and deliver an digital/online safety and security prevention strategy that is comprised of activities that are:
  - Promotional: guiding young people's learning in the digital world, and
  - Protective: mitigating or buffering risk by protection, support or intervention.
- Disruption by digital technology of traditional boundaries (such as timetables and physical location) necessitates that boards are "working collaboratively with parents and whānau to improve student achievement and well being" (p.7).

## **Responsibilities**

NetSafe believes that a board's responsibility to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students and staff should be extended to explicitly include digital/virtual environments.

### **Q4. What changes could be made to simplify planning and reporting?**

NetSafe believes that improvements are required in national data collection and sharing in strategic priority areas such as tackling bullying; at school, regional and national (inter-agency and sector) levels. Current systems and processes are not sufficiently capable to enable schools to easily collect data. Developments such as the N4L should be leveraged to deploy adaptive approaches to capturing and using data across the education system.

NetSafe believes that a differential approach to schools' planning and reporting requirements is justified. However, a school's performance should not preclude it from accountability to shorter term national objectives such as effective digital technology uptake or bullying. Again, NetSafe believes that the concept of a 'smarter' system could enable schools to adopt a model of accountability to their communities on a continual improvement basis while also contributing to system-level understanding.

### **Q5. How can we better provide for groups of schools and kura to work together more to plan and report?**

As noted in the response to Q4, there is considerable scope for digital technology to be harnessed to provide channels for collaboration and data sharing.

### **Q6. How should schools and kura report on their performance and children and young people's achievement to parents, family, whānau and communities?**

Refer to responses to Q4 and Q5.

## **Supporting boards to focus on what's important**

### **Q7. What should the indicators and measures be for school performance and student achievement and well being?**

As noted in response to Q1 and Q2, NetSafe believes that there should be national goals and priorities for 'digital' and well being. These should be supported by indicators that support schools' work. Further, policy forces (such as the school connection project and managed network) are contributing to a rapid increase digital technology uptake (e.g. through BYOD) and concomitant increase in digital challenge. It is NetSafe's view that explicit digital/online safety and security indicators should be in place until related practices are normalised.

**Q8. What freedoms and extra decision-making rights could be given to schools, kura and Communities of Learning that are doing well?**

No response provided. Question is not directly relevant to online safety and security.

**Enabling collaboration, flexibility and innovation**

**Q9. What ways could board's work more closely together?**

As noted in responses to Q2-6 NetSafe believes that schools' engagement with each other and their wider communities is of central importance to creating safer and more secure digital learning environments. New approaches to collaborating through digital media should have a role in supporting collaboration between schools. However, NetSafe welcomes any mechanisms (such as clustering) that enable schools to pool resources to develop, share or access specialist knowledge (such as digital/online security).

**Q10. What do you think about schools and kura having the flexibility to introduce cohort or group entry?**

No response provided. Question is not directly relevant to online safety and security.

**Q11. What do you think about making attendance compulsory for children once they have started school or kura before they turn six years old?**

No response provided. Question is not directly relevant to online safety and security.

**Making every school and kura a great one**

**Q12. What additional supports or responses could be used to address problems that arise in schools and kura?**

NetSafe believes there is a need for better coordination of the system's response to digital/online safety and security challenges and incidents (involving cross-sector/multi-agency approach).

Also note previous responses to questions that refer to the need for a shared understanding of educational issues (such an online safety and security), improved data gathering and information sharing across the system.

## **Making best use of local education provision**

**Q13. How should area strategies be decided, and how should schools, kura and communities be consulted?**

Refer to responses to Q1 and Q2 i.e. improving engagement with wider community in the process of setting local strategies based on a set of national goals and priorities (that explicitly include 'digital' and well being).

**Q14. What should be taken into account when making decisions about opening, merging or closing schools?**

No response provided. Question is not directly relevant to online safety and security.

**Q15. What do you think about the proposed changes to improve how enrolment schemes are managed?**

No response provided. Question is not directly relevant to online safety and security.