



PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE

Te Ratonga Whare Pāremata



# Education Services Conference Report 2010/11

# **New Zealand Parliamentary Service Education Services Conference Report 2010/11**

Tena koutou katoa

## **Overview**

2010/11 has been a mixed year for the Education Services unit of the New Zealand Parliament. There have been some highs and lows, with dramatic events sometimes taking the forefront but overall we have managed to make some sound progress towards our goal of keeping the service relevant and meeting the needs of both our internal and external stakeholders. In my last report I referred to the review we undertook to identify the best way forward for the next five years. In this report I will outline where we are post review and also put this in the context of general change within the Parliamentary Service.

The New Zealand Parliamentary Service has undergone a series of reviews and restructures this past year. This has been necessary in a climate where a recession has required budget restraint and the service has had to look at ways of working more efficiently and at how to deliver the same level of service in the face of rising costs. Finding better ways of working and sharing services is part of this new reality.

This has impacted on Education Services in a number of ways. It has been more important than ever that we prioritise in terms of development and what we offer and that we find ways to make things happen within a modest budget. After our review last year (Education Services Scoping Report) which I reported on at last year's conference we identified our goal this year was to provide teaches with more support pre and post visit. By developing a planning resource we could give teachers a variety of opportunities to use Parliament as a context for study. This work is now largely finished and the new planning resource will hopefully be available online in the New Year. We have been very careful in producing this resource that we have followed a rigorous process which has involved workshops with teachers and other educators to ensure the finished product is in line with current best practice and has the appropriate links with the curriculum. This has been a result of the valuable lessons we have

learnt from our review. We hope to trial the resource with classroom teachers before putting the final product on our website.

Once this process is completed we will be looking at producing more specific resources which are linked to the planning resource. As part of this process we will see what opportunities there are for linking the work we do with other education providers such as the Electoral Commission. We will also be putting forward a case for developing a specific part of the Parliamentary website which is specific to the needs of teachers and students.

As well as this we have streamlined our work organisation and processes. With only a small team any development has had to fit around business as usual. In an effort to allow us to focus on the delivery of visits and development of resources we have handed over some of the administration to our Visitor Centre Assistant. Telephone enquiries and bookings are now done through this service freeing us up to get on with other aspects of the job. So far this has worked really well and we continue to look for ways to make the most of our small staff. Next year we will be bringing in a regular staff development component to the job to ensure we are as knowledgeable as we can be about the New Zealand Parliament but also are familiar with systems in other countries.

Continuing collaboration and networking with other providers of learning experiences is an area we continued to work on. Working with other providers (Learning Outside the Classroom) continues to provide not only collegial support but it has had some economic benefits as well. We once again attended a major conference for teachers of Social Sciences (SOCCON). This time around we had a joint information stand with some other providers who are geographical neighbours - the Reserve Bank Museum and Old St. Paul's. Not only were we able to share costs in terms of renting space but we were able to reinforce for teachers the many opportunities for students that are available in the Thorndon area. A Thorndon Network Services Group has been established to encourage joint promotion of services.

We have also continued to build links with publishers of resources and have already had success with a resource produced for use in Māori medium schools. We would really like to grow these relationships to allow for high quality targeted resources to be produced without the need for our input apart from concepts and information. Learning Media which is the main contractor for the

Ministry of Education has requested a meeting to look at ways we can work together which we are very excited about.

Another focus in the coming year will be to make the classroom more interactive with more visual displays for the walls some of which will change regularly and be based around current topical issues. We have also produced a visual presentation for the interactive board which we hope will help engage students at the beginning of their visit. There is still much to be done but we are mindful that we should not try to do too much at once at the risk of producing resources that are not based on sound planning.

We are also aware that in New Zealand many teachers are still coming to grips with the social enquiry approach outlined in the 2007 curriculum. Our aim is to provide a service where teachers can feel free to drop into Parliament and be provided with advice and help in terms of planning an approach to a study of Parliament that moves away from simply providing big chunks of information on parliamentary process. We have always hoped to provide professional development opportunities for teachers but this has yet to become a reality. We are presently looking at options including the possibility of free seminars held in the school holidays.

Apart from all this New Zealand is facing a General Election in November and we have been aware that many teachers are using this as a basis for some of their learning this year. This year we set aside two separate weeks to provide specialised visit experiences around the election process. The Election Role Play we used in 2008 has been revisited and we have also offered a tailored visit focussed on the election process. Both weeks have been popular and booked out. We would like to build on the concept of offering a number of visit options for visiting groups and will look at this again in the coming year.

In conclusion I would like to say this has been a busy year with plenty of development underway. It has been overshadowed somewhat though by the passing away of Pat Siemonek who worked with Education Services for over a decade. It has been difficult for everyone to come to terms with his absence. His cheerful presence has been missed and he is remembered by many teachers and students he came into contact with over the years. We have been filling his position in a temporary way but will be recruiting in December for someone

permanent. Thank you to everyone who sent messages of support and sorry I can't be with you this year. I look forward to catching up with you all next time.

Until then,

Kia ora

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