TUKAU
LAW AND CONSULTANCY

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Waitangi Tribunal
24 Mar 2026
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

Appendix “A”

Tēnā koe Minister

As a collective of subject associations, representing teachers and learners across Aotearoa New Zealand, we write to express our concerns about the current consultation processes surrounding curriculum and assessment change.

Subject associations are led by teachers and sustained by a wide network of dedicated volunteers. Our role is to support kaiako, ākonga, and kura by ensuring that teaching and learning in each learning area is robust, future-focused, and equitable. As the recognised voices of learning area and subject expertise, we believe we are a critical part of the development and feedback process on any change that directly impacts our learning areas and subjects, as well as the students who engage with them.

Unfortunately, the recent pattern of inequitable communications has left many subject associations sidelined. While some areas have been provided with early and meaningful engagement, others have received only limited or last-minute notice, sometimes mere minutes before public announcements are made. This is not consultation, it is notification. Such practices undermine our ability to contribute constructively, and risk both short- and long-term consequences for the quality and sustainability of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

We are also concerned about the lack of clarity regarding who is writing the Phase 5 curriculum and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects. As vocational education is set to be developed through the Industry Skills Boards (ISBs), we seek assurance from you and the Ministry that the relevant subject associations will be included in this development. Our involvement is essential to ensure that industry-informed content is not only accurate but also fit for use in secondary schools, where teaching and learning contexts can differ significantly from the workplace.

Further, the subject list identified that associations will play a role in supporting the sector and with only one term left in the school year, and a curriculum rollout imminent, there has been no communication about how this role will be enacted, including the future of the Networks of Expertise. Greater clarity and collaboration are needed if we are to provide meaningful support for kura, kaiako, and ākonga.

We wish to emphasise that our goal is not to oppose change, but to ensure that change is well-informed, collaborative, transparent, and workable in schools. Subject associations bring together both classroom expertise and system-wide perspectives, making us well-placed to highlight opportunities, identify and mitigate risks, and support teachers through transitions.

We respectfully ask for a genuine partnership with the Ministry and with you as Minister. We want to see processes where all subject associations are included early and equitably in consultation, rather than receiving news through the media or after-the-fact briefings. This shift would strengthen trust, improve outcomes, and demonstrate respect for the profession.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Ministry of Education, to ensure that changes serve the best interests of our learners and the future of education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ngā mihi nui,

Fiona McDonald
Chief Executive
Education Outdoors New Zealand (EONZ)

Hamish Johnston
Heamana | Chair
Technology Education New Zealand (TENZ)

Heemi McDonald
Managing Director
Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ)

Annette Thomson
President
Whakaari Aotearoa Drama NZ

Kat Daniela
Chair
Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa (MENZA)

Nick Fitness
Kaiārahi
New Zealand History Teachers' Association (NZHTA)

Jamieson Hudson
Co-Chair
Jennie Williams
Kaiārahi
Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators (ANZAAE)

Callum Green
Chair
Tourism Teachers Aotearoa NZ (TTANZ)

Erana Whaiapu and Paul Murray
Executive Co-Chairs
New Zealand Association for Environmental Education (NZAEE)

Karen Dobric, Liz Carrick, Esther Williams
Co-chairs
Aotearoa Foundation Skills and Pathways Association (AFSAPA)

Rex Newman
Agricultural President
Horticulture and Agriculture Teachers Association of New Zealand (HATA)

Kerry Allen
Agribusiness in Schools Curriculum Director
Agribusiness in Schools

Ian Thomas
President
National Association of Media Educators (NAME)

David Housden
Chairperson
New Zealand Institute of Physics Education Section (NZIPES)

Kate Hamilton
Chairperson
Dance Subject Association New Zealand (DSANZ)

Nicole Polke
President
German Teachers Aotearoa NZ (GANZ)

Pip Tinning
President
New Zealand Association of Teachers of English (NZATE)

Stefanie Hossbach
President
New Zealand Association of French Teachers (NZAFT)

Toni Tippett
President
New Zealand Graphics & Technology Teachers Association (NZGTTA)

Gwenna Finikin
President
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Aotearoa New Zealand (TESOLANZ)

Andrew Churches
President
Digital Technology Teachers Aotearoa (DTTA)

Brendon Chapple
President
New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers (NZAJLT)

Mary Robinson
Chairperson and Kaiārahi
Board of Geography Teachers (NZBOGT)

Barbara Ormond
President
New Zealand Art History Teachers' Association (NZAHTA)

Ian Torrie and Murray Thompson
Co-Chairs
Secondary Chemistry Educators NZ (SCENZ)

Megan Nightingale
National Network Convenor
Maria Perreau
Kaiārahi
Aotearoa Social Studies Educators' Network (ASSEN)

Kenneth Loh
BEANZ President
Biology Educators of Aotearoa NZ (BEANZ)

Appendix “B”

4 December 2025

Kia ora,

We write as a collective voice of Aotearoa New Zealand’s subject associations. Together, we represent the professional expertise of tens of thousands of teachers, educators, and learners across learning areas. We are united by a shared commitment to high-quality education and to the development of a curriculum that is coherent, equitable, and future focused.

While we acknowledge the intent of the Curriculum Refresh, the process surrounding its recent development and consultation has raised serious concerns across the education sector. The current approach continues to undermine confidence in both the integrity of the process and the trust that must exist between the Ministry, the teaching profession, and subject communities.

The process to date has not demonstrated the transparency or partnership that a national curriculum demands. There has been limited clarity around decision-making, authorship, and the use of expert input. Many associations have found consultation to be inconsistent and largely procedural, with minimal evidence that sector expertise has informed the drafts. In addition, some associations have been excluded from consultation processes altogether.

As a result, professional trust has been damaged. In many instances, the relationship between the Ministry and those responsible for delivering the curriculum in schools has weakened at a critical time for the education system. The credibility of any curriculum depends on the confidence of those who teach it. That confidence is at risk.

Subject associations are essential partners in curriculum design and implementation. They represent decades of collective experience and disciplinary expertise. Genuine engagement with these professional bodies is not optional; it is necessary to ensure the curriculum is educationally sound and workable in practice.

We believe that curriculum development must be grounded in three core principles:

1. Transparency in process and decision-making.
2. Collaboration with the teaching profession and subject experts.
3. Trust built through respect for professional knowledge and evidence-based practice.

Without these, the curriculum will not have the support of those required to deliver it.

To restore confidence and rebuild trust, we call on the Ministry of Education to take the following actions:

1. Pause and review the current consultation process. Establish clear and transparent mechanisms that allow for genuine engagement and accountability.
2. Convene facilitated hui with subject associations. These should be open, respectful forums where subject experts can work collaboratively with curriculum developers to refine and strengthen the drafts.
3. Commit to a co-design approach. Future iterations of the curriculum must be developed with the profession through structured pilots, classroom trials, and transparent feedback processes.

These actions are essential if the curriculum is to reflect the expertise of the profession and the aspirations of Te Mātaiaho and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Our shared aim is simple: a curriculum that reflects disciplinary integrity, honours te ao Māori, is practical and implementable in classrooms, and that our sectors can confidently teach and champion.

We stand ready to meet, to provide evidence and expertise, and to work constructively with the Ministry and curriculum developers to achieve that outcome.

Ngā mihi nui.

Signed on behalf of:

Agribusiness in Schools

Aotearoa Foundation Skills and Pathways Association (AFSAPA)

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators (ANZAAE)

Aotearoa Social Studies Educators' Network (ASSEN)

Dance Subject Association of New Zealand (DSANZ)

Earth & Space Science Educators of New Zealand (ESSENZ)

Education Outdoors New Zealand (EONZ)

Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand (HETTANZ)

Horticulture and Agriculture Teachers Association of New Zealand (HATA)

German in Aotearoa New Zealand (GANZ)

Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa (MENZA)

National Association of Media Educators (NAME)

New Zealand Chinese Language Teachers Association (NZCLTA)

New Zealand Association for Environmental Education (NZAEE)

New Zealand Association of French Teachers (NZAFT)

New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers (NZJLT)

New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT)

New Zealand Association of Psychology Teachers (NZAPT)

New Zealand Association of Teachers of English (NZATE)

New Zealand History Teachers' Association (NZHTA)

Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ)

Religious Studies Teachers Association of Aotearoa New Zealand

Secondary Chemistry Educators New Zealand (SCENZ)

Te Reo Māori Subject Association of Aotearoa (TRMSAA)

Technology Education New Zealand (TENZ)

Tourism Teachers' Aotearoa New Zealand (TTANZ)

Whakaari Aotearoa Drama NZ

Appendix “C”

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

DECEMBER 2025, SPECIAL EDITION

MĀORI LEADERS ON THE FUTURE OF HPE

A Special Edition of the Physical Educator

Guest Editors
Amy Kaukau
Pūkenga (Lecturer) Hauora me te Akoranga Kori Tinana (Health and Physical Education) Kura Hākinakina School of Sport and Recreation, Te Wānanga Aronui O Tāmaki Makau Rau, Auckland University of Technology.

Heemi McDonald
Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Rahiri, Rangitane ki Wairau, Ngāti Apa ki te Rā To. Managing Director PENZ.

Design & Layout
PENZ

Front, Back Cover & P. 18 Images
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Images
PENZ

Contributions
The Physical Educator welcomes contributions that share practice, research, and critical perspectives that support strong, culturally grounded Physical Education in Aotearoa.

Material for publication welcome and can be sent to editor@penz.org.nz.

Purpose

The Physical Educator is the professional practice journal of Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ). It exists to support strong, coherent, and future-focused Health and Physical Education across Aotearoa. The journal provides a platform for critical reflection, practitioner insight, and sector leadership, with a clear commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and culturally sustaining practice.

The Physical Educator Aims To:

- Strengthen professional practice.
- Elevate Māori knowledge and leadership within Physical Education.
- Support critical engagement with curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.
- Connect research, practice, and advocacy across the sector.

About this Special Edition

This issue is published as a standalone special edition of The Physical Educator. It centres Māori academic and knowledge-holder perspectives in response to the draft Health and Physical Education curriculum. The intent is to inform professional dialogue, support collective advocacy, and strengthen the integrity and future direction of Physical Education in Aotearoa.

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

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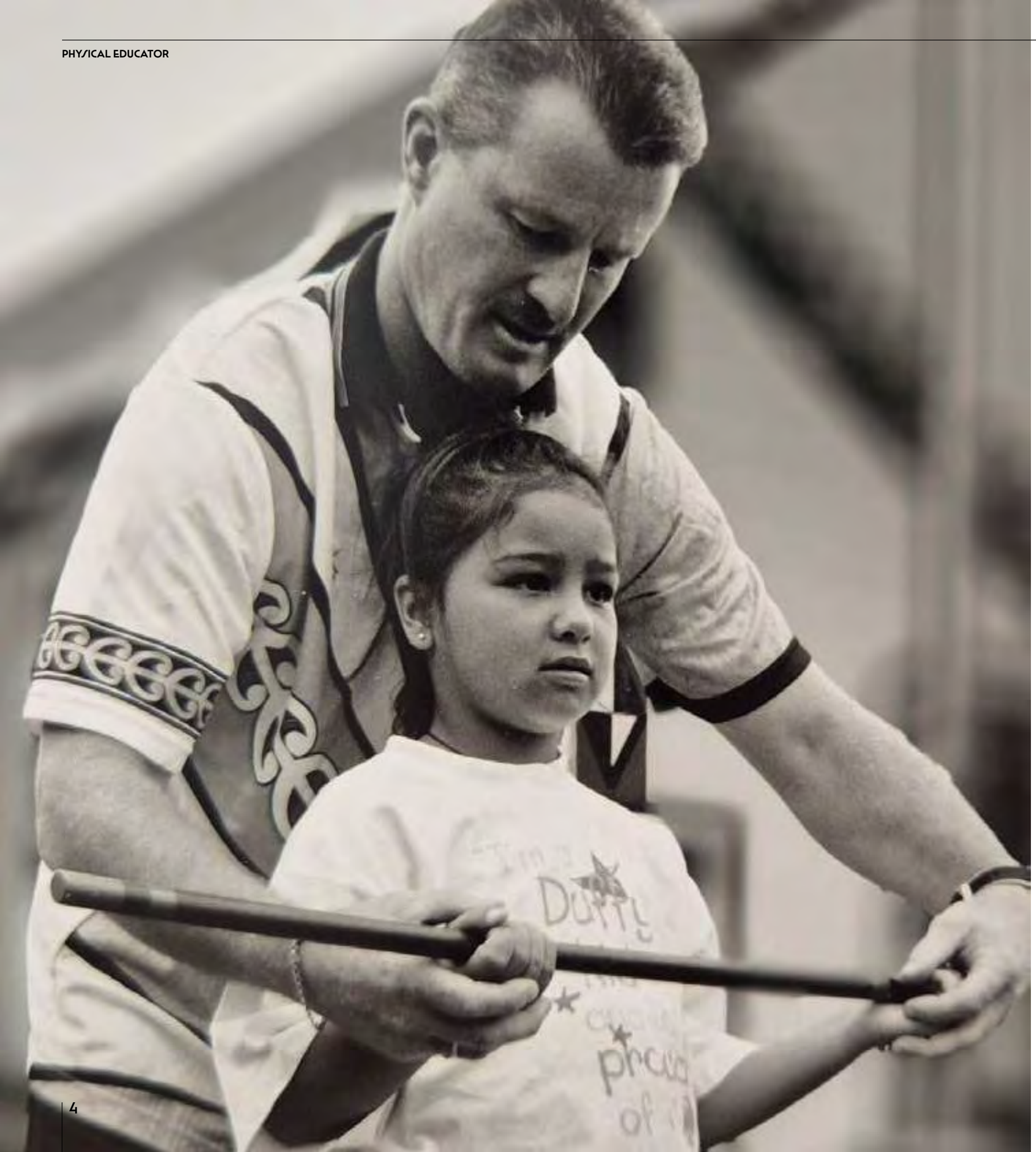

EDITORIAL

Tēnā tātou katoa. It is good to be bringing the *Aotearoa New Zealand Physical Educator* back to our community after a long pause. Our last publication was late 2019, and a lot has changed since then. The past few years have reshaped our sector, our classrooms, and the way we think about the role of Physical Education in the lives of young people. Reviving this publication is an opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and set a clear direction for the future.

We want to acknowledge those who have carried this publication over many years. Their mahi built a platform that connected teachers, researchers, and leaders across Aotearoa. As we return to print, we do so with appreciation for the foundations they created and the commitment they showed to our profession.

This edition is different to anything we have published before. It stands as a special edition, focused entirely on the voices of Māori knowledge leaders who have responded to the draft Health and Physical Education curriculum. Working alongside them has been a privilege. Their perspectives are grounded in deep scholarship, lived experience, and a genuine commitment to the wellbeing of all ākonga.

Across their contributions, a consistent message emerges. Physical Education is not only about movement. It is about identity, belonging, whakapapa, and our relationship with the taiao. When these foundations are strengthened, young people thrive. When they are diluted or removed, we lose the essence of what makes our learning area meaningful.

Our hope is that this edition supports thoughtful discussion and collective action. As we restart the publication of the Physical Educator, we invite you to be part of shaping its future. If you have reflections, insights, or examples of practice you would like to share, we welcome your voice.

Ngā mihi nui,
Amy Kaukau & Heemi McDonald
Guest Editors, Aotearoa New Zealand Physical Educator

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

Māori knowledge leaders respond to the draft HPE Curriculum.

This special edition brings together the voices of Māori academics, practitioners, and knowledge holders who have offered their expertise to help our sector understand the deeper implications of the draft Health and Physical Education curriculum. Their perspectives are grounded in whakapapa, research, lived experience, and longstanding commitment to improving outcomes for Māori and non-Māori ākonga across Aotearoa.

Each contributor brings a distinct lens shaped by their whakapapa, their professional journey, and their work alongside communities. Yet a shared message runs through their reflections. They remind us that movement is inherently relational, that wellbeing is holistic, and that Physical Education draws its strength from connections to identity, place, and the wider taiao. When these connections are weakened, the learning area loses its purpose. When they are honoured, HPE has the potential to transform the ways young people understand themselves and the world around them.

The voices included here do not speak only to what is missing in the draft curriculum. They speak to what is possible. They outline the risks of sanitising Māori knowledge and the consequences of centring performance over meaning. They also offer a pathway forward, one that restores coherence, strengthens cultural integrity, and upholds our responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

As you read their words, we encourage you to approach this piece not as critique alone, but as an invitation. These leaders are asking us to imagine Physical Education in Aotearoa that is anchored in hauora, informed by the taiao, rich in sociocultural understanding, and responsive to the diverse identities of our learners. Their contributions challenge us, but they also support us to think deeply about the role we each play in shaping the future of this learning area.

We are grateful for their generosity, their clarity, and the care they have taken in offering this guidance. Their voices strengthen the profession and provide direction at a time when direction is urgently needed.

Ahorangi Professor Anne-Marie Jackson

Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Kahu o Whangaroa, Ngāti Wai

Professor of Hauora Māori, Kaihautū Managing Director Rehutai (independent Māori research and advocacy company), Director National Centre of Research Excellence Coastal People: Southern Skies.

Dr Nicole (Nikki) Penetito-Hemara

Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Kahungunu, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāti Porou

Kaiwhakahaere Matua Managing Director Kori Collaborative, Ringa Raupā Senior Consultant Oi Collective, Tākaro Contractor Toi Tangata.

Associate Professor Jeremy Hapeta

Ngāti Raukawa

Māori Sport, Physical Education and Oranga (Wellbeing) Te Kaupeka Oranga (Faculty of Health), Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha University of Canterbury.

Dr Ihirangi Heke

Waikato-Tainui

Creator of Atua Matua Adjunct Professor; Case Western Reserve (Cleveland), Montana State University (Bozeman), University of Otago (Dunedin), Victoria University (Wellington) Advisor; Auckland University of Technology (Auckland), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Disease (London), Google LLC Mountain View (California), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC (London)

Associate Professor Te Hurinui Karaka-Clarke

Te Arawa, Ngāi Tahu

Associate Professor Mātauranga Māori, Te Kura Toi Tangata (School of Education), Associate Dean Academic, Te Wānanga Toi Tangata (Education) Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, The University of Waikato.

Professor Brendan Hokowhitu

Ngāti Pūkenga

Professor of Indigenous Research, University of Queensland.

WHERE IS HAUORA?

The draft Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum 2025 shifts the learning area in ways that Māori knowledge leaders see as culturally "unsafe".

On the surface the draft seeks to prioritise performative tasks and technical outcomes. Much more deeply disguised is the extrapolation of ākonga from their lived experiences. Furthermore, through the over-simplification of learning to a robotic, almost business-like, set of key performance indicators, a void of knowledge-rich learning experiences arises.

Emerging from the void is a sanitisation of Māori knowledge and values. Māori concepts sit on the page, but fail to breach the "knowledge-rich" framework.

The proposed shifts will inevitably affect how ākonga come to understand themselves and the world around them while at school. For ākonga Māori in English medium settings, the sanitisation process further distances them from opportunities to interact with te ao Māori, tikanga Māori and hauora Māori in a "safe" learning environment.

One of the more visible, and concerning shifts in the draft is the removal of hauora as an organising concept.

In both the 1999 and 2007 Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum wellbeing and hauora were positioned as coexistent and interoperable concepts. In so doing, the 1999 Curriculum explicitly defined hauora as a "Māori philosophy of health unique to New Zealand" encompassing "taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha whānau, and taha wairua". By articulating this position, the curriculum positioned 'hauora', both as a noun and framework, providing a clear definition of the concept.

Ahorangi Professor Anne-Marie Jackson says that the "HPE curriculum was ahead of its time, introducing a New Zealand grown, Indigenous model of health and wellbeing as a complementary underlying concept to benefit all ākonga. In New Zealand, as an example of international best practice, hauora is synonymous with holistic development, health and wellbeing, contribution to life long learning, social inclusion, environment, all important facets for example of the United Nations definitions of the importance of physical education to society".

> *When hauora disappears, we do not simply lose a concept; we lose a worldview that has long sustained wellbeing in Aotearoa.*
>
> Associate Professor Te Hurinui Karaka-Clarke

Since the 1999 curriculum, hauora has been one of "four underlying and interdependent concepts" at the "heart of the learning area". It's guided teaching and supported learning which linked identity, relationships, and environment.

Dr Te Hurinui Karaka-Clarke explains that hauora reflects balance and responsibility. It links tinana, wairua, hinengaro, and whānau. Without it, ākonga complete tasks but lose chances to explore who they are. This weakens the core of HPE. Dr Karaka-Clarke further clarifies that "when hauora disappears, we do not simply lose a concept; we lose a worldview that has long sustained wellbeing in Aotearoa." More importantly, he explains, "in te ao Māori, movement is never just mechanical; it is relational", therefore, in removing hauora we are also removing an anchor whereby teachers build meaningful and relational learning experiences.

Further, an unforeseen consequence of the absence of hauora in the draft is the potential disruption to tertiary programmes that rely on holistic models. Fields such as health and sport, social work and teacher education depend on these integrated concepts of wellbeing. Curriculum settings need to stay aligned with the knowledge ākonga require for their professional futures.

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PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

"TĀKARO IS MEMORY, HEALING, WHAKAPAPA TRANSMISSION AND JOY."

Dr Nikki Penetito-Hemara

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PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

DIVORCING MEANING & MOVEMENT

The loss of meaning in movement stands out as another key area of concern.

In the draft, tākaro and pūrākau are treated as activities to *do*, rather than ancestral practices that carry whakapapa, memory, joy, and regulation. For Māori, tākaro is the critical nexus where meaning is forged through physical action.

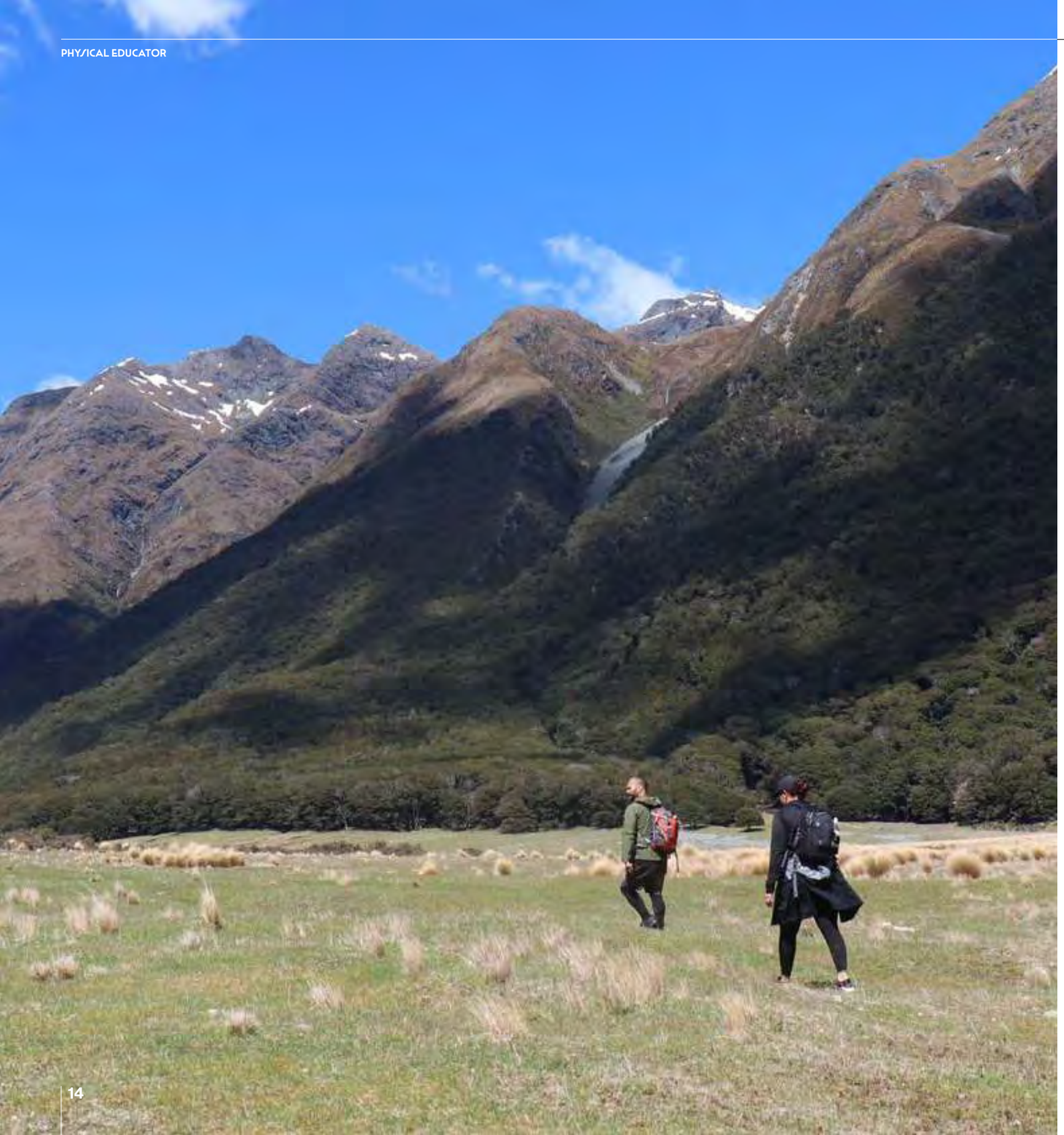
Dr Nikki Penetito-Hemara positions tākaro as "a form of learning, healing, memory, whakapapa transmission and joy" and explains that ākonga use tākaro to expend energy, settle mauri and find belonging with others and with the taiao. Or in other words, they make meaning in movement. She also highlights that when tākaro is framed as a task, the depth falls away and that in its current form, this draft "risks further distancing our young people from their own embodied knowledge, whakapapa, and sources of identity".

Movement then becomes something to complete, not something that completes us. In that shift, ākonga lose access to embodied practices that shape identity, emotional stability and the sense of feeling connected.

This divorce is engineered in the way Māori terms are used and positioned. One example is the use of 'te ao kori' as a context for choreographed movement. Ākonga are required to practice shapes, speeds, and stillness to music. In this example, separated from movement; atua, whenua and whakapapa disappear. Te ao kori becomes another routine. The system pushes teachers towards technical repetition instead of the ancestral meaning-making potential connected to their actions.

Yes. The kupu (words) are visible. But the life breathed into those kupu, through generations, is extinguished, completing the process of separation.

Ultimately, Dr Penetito-Hemara explains, "without intentional Māori-led design, this curriculum could silence some of the most powerful hauora practices we have: pūrākau as pedagogy, tākaro as regulation/identity formation, and embodied learning that celebrates and strengthens te ira tangata". "Our tamariki deserve learning environments where their bodies are not problems to be solved, but homes of memory and potential!"



RELEGATING ENVIRONMENT & PLACE

Fundamental aspects in Māori understandings of movement are missing in the draft.

Dr Ihirangi Heke reinforces that the draft curriculum misses an important aspect in Māori understandings of movement: that the environment is not a backdrop but an active teacher.

He warns that the draft weakens the relationship between movement and identity in relation to the environment. Dr Heke explains that Māori movement practice emerges from a whakapapa of environmental observation.

Through atua (environmental representation) narratives, Māori developed sophisticated systems of reading patterns in wind, water, terrain, season, and climate in order to regulate movement, behaviour, and wellbeing. Movement was never abstract or detached. It was shaped by the rhythms and demands of the taiao, and these patterns were encoded in mātauranga through things such as atua, place names, and pūrākau.

Māori understand movement as a dialogue with place. The mover and the environment are not separate.

Ākonga learn with whenua and wai through the patterns carried by atua. When ākonga learn to read the world around them, they develop physical competence, emotional steadiness, and a sense of belonging that is grounded in whakapapa. Observing the flow of water, the variability of wind, or the changing energy of a landscape teaches timing, balance, decision-making, and mauri regulation.

These are not additions to physical education. They are essential foundations that strengthen wellbeing and identity.

Dr Heke warns that the draft's focus on decontextualised skills treats the environment as optional. It treats movement as something that happens on top of the environment rather than within it. Skills and actions are taught as human-centred tasks. Environmental knowledge becomes an optional extra. This strips away the relational depth that sits at the core of how Māori understand movement.

Curriculum design must begin with taiao, not with technique. Teaching movement through engagement with place strengthens identity, supports self-regulation, cultivates responsibility for the natural world, and restores authority to knowledge systems shaped through centuries of interaction with the taiao.

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

EMBEDDING COLONIAL DISSONANCE

> *"The proposed curriculum changes are contrary to international best practice and the body of evidence, literature and experience."*
>
> Ahorangi Professor Anne-Marie Jackson

Professor Brendan Hokowhitu reinforces the importance of the connection between whakapapa and taiao. He notes that Māori movement practice cannot be separated from whakapapa or from the taiao. If we go back into our creation stories, the taiao created by atua, reflects movement that supports growth and freedom.

Professor Hokowhitu outlines that the draft curriculum repeats a wider pattern in which Māori knowledge is made visible yet stripped of authority. He articulates that "Māori ways of knowing are, again, being erased" and that "whilst some ground has been gained, the [draft] curriculum clearly is an attempt to reassert the colonial project of erasure as in the broader desire to remove Te Tiriti of Waitangi."

He reminds educators that colonisation was not only about land loss. It involved the imposition of an external worldview over an Indigenous one. This produced long term cultural dissonance that continues to affect Māori identity and health in ways that also disrupt relationships and wellbeing.

Professor Hokowhitu reaffirms that "Māori do not see themselves or their worldviews in dominant discourses, including curricula" and curricula that minimise Māori presence keep this dissonance in place.

This also affects movement education. Hokowhitu explains that colonisation disrupted the coherent way Māori once ordered the physical and the metaphysical.

Prior to colonisation, mātauranga of physical activity developed over multiple generations within a holistic, whakapapa informed system of knowledge that aligned with Māori understandings of the universe. The draft does not support this coherence. It narrows Māori movement practice to techniques and tasks, and removes the metaphysical depth that once guided physical praxis.

Professor Hokowhitu argues that this is the opposite of a Kaupapa Māori approach. He outlines that "Kaupapa Māori curricula emphasise mana motuhake, self-determination and autonomy, as foundational to design and delivery".

A curriculum that sidelines Māori worldviews undermines that autonomy. It signals that Māori knowledge is decorative rather than foundational.

DEGRADING SOCIOCULTURAL LEARNING

The degradation of sociocultural learning is another significant weakness of the draft. Physical Education carries a responsibility to help ākonga understand how movement reflects culture, identity, place, and power.

Dr Penetito-Hemara explains that tākaro "is where we [Māori] practice being in relationship with whenua, with each other, with our tīpuna". When the draft removes these sociocultural intentions, it strips the relational from the movement.

The Māori knowledge leaders make clear why this matters.

Movement is never separate from whakapapa, tikanga, histories, or the taiao. This erasure of context constitutes a major backward step, failing to align with and build upon established, comprehensive pedagogical practices. To be effective and culturally relevant, the teaching of movement must align with a holistic framework, recognising the connection between learning in, through, and about movement. A connection the draft ignores.

The curriculum framework itself creates an artificial separation between bodies of knowledge thereby weakening, by design, the interdependent and relational nature of movement experiences.

Without sociocultural learning, ākonga are not required to make sense of these relationships and interdependencies. They learn action devoid of purpose and people.

The positioning of ngā taonga tākaro in the draft illustrates the degradation process. Ngā taonga tākaro carry whakapapa and teach connection with place. The draft positions these games as vessels to deliver movement technique instruction. In doing so, their purpose is inverted. According to the draft, when participating in ngā taonga tākaro, ākonga gain 'skills' yet are not required to explore the relational, environmental and cultural understandings that give these games form and meaning. This shift reduces them from rich cultural practices to mere tools for physical education, severing the deep-seated connections to Māori knowledge, history, and worldview that define their essence.

Consequently, the true pedagogical power of ngā taonga tākaro, the transmission of cultural values, identity, and holistic wellbeing, is lost, replaced by a narrow focus on instrumental athletic ability.

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

POWER REGULATION IN ACTION

Māori knowledge leaders also highlight a concerning shift in power dynamics within the proposed curriculum. Associate Professor Jeremy Hapeta notes that the draft reflects a move towards tighter control. He argues that it aligns with state-led, globally dominant trends where health and movement education become instrumental tools for monitoring and standardising the body. He explains that in this model "governmental power rationalises disciplinarity, while the 'sovereign right of the state' assumes almighty power", effectively centralising authority and dictating educational and bodily norms.

Such centralisation reshapes the school environment and repositions HPE from a potential site of holistic growth and empowerment to one characterised by compliance and discipline. Māori ākonga already navigate and operate within institutional structures that are fundamentally shaped by Western and Eurocentric norms.

A curriculum structured around such strict power regulation intensifies that pressure and limits the inherent autonomy and tino rangatiratanga of ākonga. This is further exacerbated by the absence or marginalisation of authentic Māori knowledge, pedagogies, and practices within the draft. This omission is significant in its own right and is more concerning than any individual inclusion.

The draft's conceptualisation of 'wellbeing' serves as a stark illustration of this shift in power. It emphasises competencies necessary to thrive physically, mentally, and socially, which are all important in quality PE. However, it omits the 'spiritual' dimension as a core component of hauora.

This raises an obvious question: why has wairua, the spiritual domain within hauora (1999 & 2007), been dismissed? Excluding it risks collapsing understandings of wairua into narrow Western or religious frames of reference. For example there remains a propensity to conflate wairua with early religious colonial interpretations of spirituality being connected to 'te atua' or 'the *[one]* God'.

The commandeering of the term atua through the colonial project, exemplifies the pervasive nature of the risks associated with popularised misconceptions and shifts in power. This limited framing fails to recognise the depth of Māori understandings, where wairua also encompasses relational, environmental and knowledge relationships shaped through 'ngā atua' or Māori ancestral figures/deities embodying Indigenous scientific and epistemological knowledge.

If the curriculum cannot hold these diverse meanings, from individual purposes and meaning-making to deep relational connection with the natural world, then a critical question emerges. Are human beings, within this curriculum experience, no longer understood as seekers of purpose, meaning, and connection? And if PE is no longer a space to express wairua, then the 'te ao kori' content in the draft will inevitably become tokenistic and devoid of meaning.

Activities such as haka, poi, waka ama, and Kī-o-Rahi become mechanistic and robotic cultural performances that are stripped of the ihi, wehi, and wana that give them life. In practice terms, this approach diminishes rather than enhances the mana of tangata whenua.

The issue extends beyond content and speaks to deeper structural concerns, as Associate Professor Te Hurinui Karaka-Clarke points out. The draft does not reflect He Awa Whiria, the braided river approach, in genuine practice. He explains that "in He Awa Whiria terms, we are witnessing one river being dammed". Instead of meaningful weaving, Māori knowledge becomes visible but passive, while Western knowledge continues to determine the curriculum's flow and direction.

Associate Professor Karaka-Clarke warns that "the Māori awa carrying whakapapa, wairua, whanaungatanga, and mauri is being slowed and diverted by an over-emphasis on performance, measurement, and physical output." This dynamic reduces the idea of partnership to symbolism rather than substance. It enforces a power regulation scheme that systematically limits Māori ways of knowing, being and understanding.

The consultation process risks entrenching this pattern unless Māori knowledge holders are positioned as genuine partners with authority in the foundational design and governance of the curriculum.

REBUILDING THE HPE FRAMEWORK

A fundamental consensus emerges - the proposed draft, at its core, devalues movement education by stripping it of its inherent cultural and holistic meaning.

This effect is achieved through several interconnected actions: the centering of Western norms, the use of Māori kupu without corresponding Māori authority, the weakening of intrinsic links between people and place, and the undermining of a holistic understanding of hauora.

In addition, the removal of hauora restricts what all learners can access. This further weakens foundational concepts that the wider health, sport, and wellbeing sectors rely on.

These profound shifts shape how teachers will plan and how ākonga will come to understand themselves and their world. Critically, these effects extend to all ākonga, not only Māori.

To address these fundamental issues, the following key adjustments are necessary:

Restore Hauora as an Organising Framework

Restore hauora to the "heart" of the curriculum so that teaching and learning reflects an Aotearoa New Zealand centric approach to wellbeing. Require knowledge and practices to demonstrate clear connections to dimensions of hauora.

Restoring hauora does not mean teachers should need to rely on a single model; teachers should be able to draw on a range of te ao Māori frameworks. Restoring hauora aligns the draft with established Aotearoa New Zealand practice and robust international evidence.

Embed Sociocultural Learning Across the HPE Curriculum

Ensure that learning in, through, and about movement is reinstated as a key organising system within the learning area. This includes connection with taiao and place. PE carries a responsibility to help ākonga to critically analyse how movement sits within culture, identity, history, and social conditions.

Require teachers to design learning that connects movement to whakapapa, tikanga, identity, place, histories, social conditions and relationships. This will support Māori and non-Māori ākonga to engage with movement in ways that build belonging, identity, and critical awareness.

Treat Māori Knowledge as Design Logic, Not Content

Māori kupu cannot appear without the authority of the knowledge that holds them. Require curriculum writers to embed Māori worldviews, concepts, and pedagogies into the knowledge and structural design of the learning area. Champion the use of Māori kupu in line with the epistemological, cultural, and pedagogical integrity that gives them meaning.

Designing with Māori knowledge will give all ākonga access to movement that holds identity, belonging, and relationship with the taiao.

Centre Environment & Place as Essential Drivers

Embed expectations that movement is taught in dialogue with the taiao. Require learning programmes to use local environments and place-based knowledge as foundational to planning and progression.

Establish Genuine Partnerships in Curriculum Decision-Making

Grant Māori knowledge holders co-design authority across curriculum development, resource creation, and implementation. Ensure that Māori expertise shapes the purpose, structure and progression of HPE.

Partnership must be real. Many already use Māori movement and values to build belonging. Their experiences can help shape the draft. Whānau and Māori organisations know the impact of curriculum experiences on their tamariki and rangatahi. Their submissions can show how the curriculum can honour Te Tiriti and protect wellbeing.

RESTORE COHERENCE & HONOUR TE TIRITI

The analysis, articulated by Māori knowledge leaders, makes it undeniable: the draft curriculum is an attempt to reassert the colonial project of erasure, threatening to sever the deep connection between movement, meaning, and identity for all ākonga. The removal of hauora and the passive treatment of Māori knowledge are not merely curricular errors, but systemic flaws that weaken the foundations of PE in Aotearoa.

This moment demands collective action and allyship. Silence will be read as consent.

Māori knowledge leaders have named the risks. They cannot hold that burden alone. Educators, kaiako, and the wider sector must act decisively in the consultation process to champion the return of hauora, insist that Māori worldviews guide design logic, and demand genuine partnership.

Your voice carries weight in this consultation. The consultation period is an opportunity. Only by actively protecting this learning area and demanding coherence over compliance can we ensure the curriculum honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and fosters a space where the identity, belonging, and holistic wellbeing of every ākonga is enhanced, not diminished.

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

READ THE DRAFT.
NOTICE THE SHIFTS.
LISTEN TO ALL VOICES.
THEN ACT.

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