

Media Release

Friday 14 November 2025

## Encouraging Catholic Schools to Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi Commitments

Inspired by Te Whakarōpūtanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa (NZ School Boards Association) and National Iwi Chairs Forum, the Justice and Peace Commission encourages all Catholic schools and education partners to align in solidarity in expressing a deep concern over the Government's proposal to remove the requirement for school boards to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi under section 127(1d i-iii) of the Education and Training Act 2020.

The Commission believes this decision risks undoing years of progress in embedding Te Tiriti principles in school governance, work that has strengthened whānau engagement, improved student outcomes, and fostered a sense of belonging for all learners. As Crown entities, Catholic school boards have both a legal and moral duty to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Rolling back these commitments weakens the Crown's responsibility to achieve equitable outcomes for ākonga Māori.

Catholic schools should reaffirm that Te Tiriti is more than a legislative clause – it is a covenant that reflects Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles:

**Human dignity:** Every child is valued and respected for who they are.

**Solidarity:** We walk alongside Māori whānau and communities in genuine partnership.

**Common good:** All students benefit from learning our shared history and culture.

**Subsidiarity:** Decisions are made close to those they affect, strengthening local relationships between the Church, iwi and hapū.

Keeping Te Tiriti at the heart of our schools means Māori students feel seen and proud of their identity. All students gain nourishment from a deeper understanding of our history through Mātauranga Māori, te ao Maori, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.

We call on all Catholic school boards to formally confirm their commitment to continue giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in governance and decision-making. We believe Hāhi Katorika, iwi and hapū see better outcomes when Te Tiriti o Waitangi is upheld and lived. This is a powerful witness to our shared responsibility to build a society of justice and peace.

### **Call to Action:**

We encourage you to sign the petition launched by the National Iwi Chairs Forum [here](#) and urge all school boards to write to the Minister of Education confirming your commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Statement issued on behalf of Bishop Steve Lowe's Justice and Peace Commission Catholic Diocese Auckland