

Friday 14 November 2025

To the Minister and Associate Minister of Education,

We write to express deep concerns about the Government’s recent announcement of its intention to remove the requirement for school boards to “give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” from the Education and Training Act 2020. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland stand alongside Te Whakarōpūtanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa (NZ School Boards Association), the National Iwi Chairs Forum, and education sector leaders in expressing our deep concern.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishop’s Conference have consistently affirmed their commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, viewing it as a foundation for national unity and justice. They have expressed this through various statements, including lamenting actions that undermine Te Tiriti, advocating for its principles in political contexts, and linking it to their pastoral work and history, which includes Bishop Pompallier's presence at the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

As Catholic educators and communities of faith, we affirm our ongoing commitment to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi in both spirit and practice. This commitment arises not only from our responsibilities as Crown entities and educators but also as a Gospel imperative from which flow the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly the dignity of every person, solidarity, the pursuit of the common good, and care for the vulnerable.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a covenant that calls us into right relationship, between Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti in harmony with God’s creation. It embodies partnership, participation, and protection, values that mirror our call to live with justice, peace, and love. A commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi through our schools, has enriched our communities, deepened our understanding, and helped form young people who are culturally grounded and socially just.

By giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi schools affirm the right of ākongā Māori to see themselves, their language, and their culture reflected and respected in the classroom. Removing Te Tiriti commitments from education legislation jeopardises the progress made toward equitable outcomes for ākongā Māori and undermines the collective responsibility we all share in nurturing a just and inclusive Aotearoa.

We therefore affirm that our Catholic schools will continue to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in our decision-making, governance, and daily life. This means:

- Upholding mana Māori and the place of Mātauranga Māori, te ao Māori, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in our schools
- Building strong relationships with local iwi, hapū, and whānau
- Ensuring Māori students feel seen, supported, and proud of who they are
- Helping all learners grow in understanding of our shared history and culture.

As the Iwi Chairs Forum has reminded us, strong communities are built through partnership, not by rolling back commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We echo this call and stand united with all who seek to honour Te Tiriti as a living, sacred covenant.

We are inviting other Catholic schools and education communities to join us in reaffirming this commitment. Together, guided by the Gospel and our shared faith, we continue to build schools where every child knows they belong.

And finally, we strongly urge you and your colleagues to reconsider this course of action. Rather than retreat from our commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, let us strengthen them – for the good of all our tamariki and mokopuna, and for the integrity of our nation.

Issued on behalf of Bishop Steve Lowe’s Justice and Peace Commission, Catholic Diocese of Auckland.

Kathleen Card

Executive Secretary
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Te Taumata o te Hahi Katorika

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